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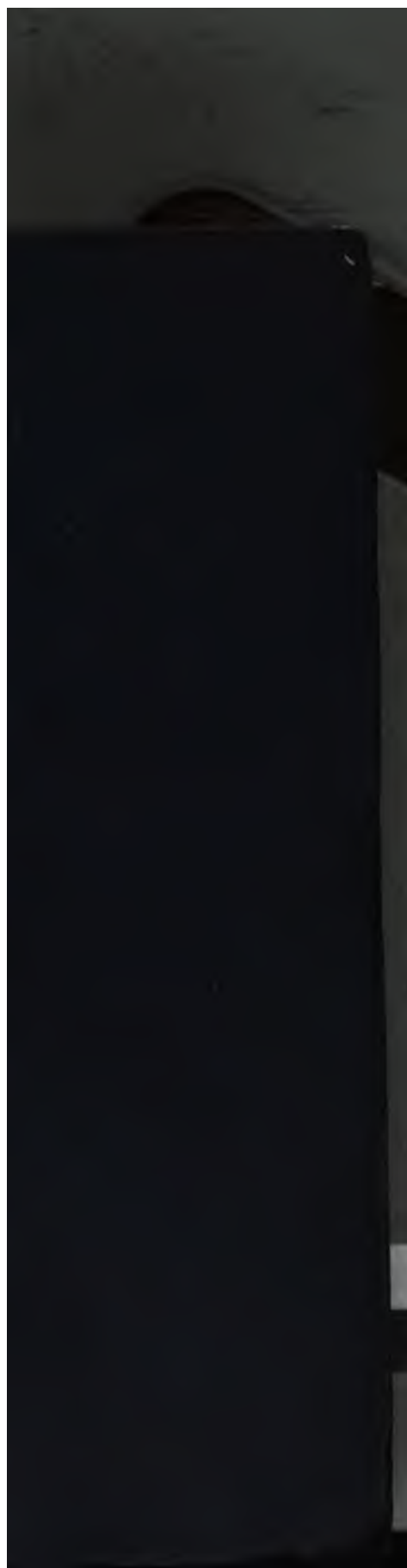
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**THE PASSING OF
PRINCE ROZAN &
A Romance of the Sea**

By

JOHN BICKERDYKE, pseud. of

Author of "Lady Val's Elopement," "Her Wild Oats"

"Daughters of Theopis," etc. Charles Henry Coe

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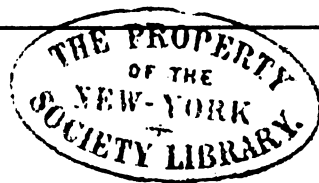


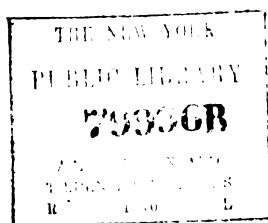
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CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I.—LADY PAT	1
II.—THE SOLICITOR FOR THE PROSECUTION	11
III.—THE DAY OF TRIAL	19
IV.—A MATTER OF TASTE	29
V.—RHONA	42
VI.—MR. DAN COEY : COMPANY-PROMOTER	50
VII.—PRINCE ROZAN	60
VIII.—THE WARNING	68
IX.—THE "LORELEI"	75
X.—A STRANGE CRAFT	86
XI.—OVER SUMMER SEAS	94
XII.—IN VINO VERITAS	104
XIII.—THE WHISPER OF A PLOT	115
XIV.—ICE	125
XV.—WE BORROW RIFLES	132
XVI.—COUNTERPLOT	142
XVII.—THE FIGHT FOR THE "LORELEI"	151
XVIII.—PRISONERS OF WAR	159
XIX.—A STARTLING PROPOSAL	167

CHAP.	PAGE
XX.—"LET US ESCAPE TOGETHER".	179
XXI.—FOR FREEDOM	190
XXII.—THE SEARCH-LIGHT	201
XXIII.—THE PHANTOM PINNACE	214
XXIV.—THE LONELY ISLE	228
XXV.—ARRESTED	240
XXVI.—AT BOW STREET	250
XXVII.—REJECTED	261
XXVIII.—THE CONJURER	271



**THE
PASSING OF PRINCE ROZAN**





THE PASSING OF PRINCE ROZAN

CHAPTER I

LADY PAT

A RUSTLE of skirts, the short yap of a lap-dog, and a second later Aaron Rodd, my careful clerk, opened the door about eight inches, sidled in, closed it, and stood on guard with his back against it.

"A lady, sir. I told her you were engaged."

"Her name?"

"She did n't tell me, sir. She said you would know it. I think she 's Irish."

There were about this time three or four women, deficient both in money and brains, who were the terrors of the Temple, calling, as the fit took them, on this or that barrister, appealing for assistance in the righting of their more or less imaginary wrongs. It might be one of these.

"Ask her to leave her name and address, Aaron," said I, "and say that it would be better if she were

to put her business into writing. I cannot be disturbed now. I must look through these papers in 'Regina v. King.' You've arranged the conference at five-thirty, have n't you?"

Before Aaron could answer, the handle turned, he was forced forward, and there walked sedately in two pug-dogs. These, having reached the centre of the room, turned round, looked at the door, and gave a couple of short barks. Then said a voice, in a rich Tipperary brogue:

"And are ye going to keep me waiting on your door-mat all the afternoon, Lucas?"

"You idiot!" said I to the clerk, who was aghast at this breach of professional etiquette; "it is Lady Kilmore. Show her in directly."

Aaron threw open the door, wide this time, in walked her ladyship, and I made my apologies.

"I thought ye 'd have known who it was," said she.

"Well, hardly; at least, not until I saw you—on the pugs."

"The darlin's! See how they've nestled down on your hearth-rug. Are n't they dears?"

My cousin, Lady Kilmore, or Lady Pat as she was called by her friends, and her pugs, Ben and Benista, were inseparables. She had the misfortune to be childless, and much of the warmth of what would have been the maternal affection of a most kind-hearted woman was lavished on these curly-tailed, fat little pugs which were then billing and cooing in the most ridiculous fashion on my hearth-

rug, licking each other's black muzzles and performing other amorous canine antics.

"I suppose ye 're after thinking what has brought me here? Are these what ye call briefs? That 's a mighty fat one; I suppose it 's called a brief because it 's so long."

"It was sent me by an Irish solicitor," said I.

"'T is too bad of you, Lucas; ye 're always making fun of the Irish. And you with Irish blood in you!"

"Not at all. But do sit down and tell me what I can do for you. Am I to spot the winner of the Cup?"

Lady Pat had all the keenness of her race where horses were concerned, and was a consistent backer in a small way. "Just to be sociable and keep Pat company," she explained to her friends.

"Ah, now! If ye could only tell me which is going to win. Pat 's backing Flyaway for all he 's worth; but I hear there 's an American jockey come over who can make a horse with three legs beat anything with four ridden by an Englishman. What do you think of that, now? But sure I did n't come to talk to ye about horse-races. Pat and I are in the most terrible trouble about Maurice. He 's going to the bad utterly."

Maurice Kilmore was Sir Patrick's only brother and the heir to the baronetcy, a man of such strong religious views that he had recently thrown up the army and gone into the church.

"Going to the bad!" I exclaimed; "why, he 's

the last man in the world I would have suspected of such a thing. Have you been taking him to any horse-races ?”

“ Oh, it ’s much worse. There would be little enough harm in that,” sighed out Lady Pat, turning her large, dark bluish-grey eyes towards the floor.

“ What ! Drink—baccarat—actresses ? Surely not.”

“ Oh, ever so much worse,” she cried. “ You know, Lucas, Maurice is Pat’s heir, and if he dies childless the baronetcy will go to those horrid O’Sullivans, of Castle O’Sullivan, County Galway. If that happened, I ’m sure Pat would never sleep easy in his grave ; nor would I, either, alive or dead. There ’s been a feud between the two families for a century or more.”

“ What ! Has he married a kitchen-maid, or something of that kind ?”

“ Faith ! ’T would have been better if he had,” said Lady Pat, sadly. “ ’T is just the other way now, for he ’s agreed to join the Society of St. Anthony, an imitation Roman Catholic affair, where all the young men take vows of celibacy. They ’ll have his money and his property, and when Pat ’s gone the O’Sullivans will get the title. Pat ’s simply mad about it. He ’s so upset that when I asked him this morning if he had made arrangements about Goodwood, he said he could n’t even think of such a thing with all this trouble on his mind. Could n’t ye find out a law, now, to prevent it, Lucas ?” And she looked at me appealingly.

"It seems more a case for the persuasion of his relatives," said I. "Has the position been put fairly and squarely before him?"

"To be sure it has. Did n't Pat and I have him to dinner the other night, and give O'Brien orders to fill his glass with champagne as often as ever he could; and did n't we talk to him for a good two hours?"

"But what did he say?"

"Oh, he said we were too much bound up with earthly things, and that he had his eternal soul in mind. I never thought Maurice could be so unkind. Sure, don't I go to church every Sunday, and never miss the bag, and subscribe to half the charities in London? To think of him talking to me like that! 'T was too bad of him."

"When does he take the vows?"

"Not till the autumn."

"Was n't he a bit of a flirt when he was in the army?"

"I don't rightly know, but there was a little widow in India who, so Tom Dawson told Pat, broke poor Maurice's heart; and ever since then he's been getting more and more religious."

It seemed to me that the fractured heart might be repaired by a lady doctor, if at all.

"Could n't you find someone to take the place of the little widow?" I suggested. "Get your brother-in-law to spend the summer with you in Ireland, and fill Castle Kilmore with pretty girls."

"I might; but the house is in ruins, and we want

new furniture," lamented Lady Pat, rising, walking to the window, and looking down upon the fountain, plashing among the plane-trees, whereby sat Tom Pinch's sweet sister years ago.

I could not help thinking, as I looked at her dark, handsome face, and tall, splendidly proportioned figure, that here was the very woman who might have stopped any man becoming a celibate, had she not already fulfilled her destiny in that direction.

"It 's hardly legal advice ye 're giving me, Lucas," she said after a pause.

"Neither is it illegal," said I—"something in the nature of a compromise."

"I can't think of anyone at all likely," she said, sitting down again and taking one of the pugs on to her lap. "There 's Lily Hamilton, but she 's as good as engaged to young Stewart; and Pattie O'Brien 's gone to Switzerland for the summer. Corine could win any man's heart, but Prince Rozan means to have a duke for her at the very least. That pretty Robertson girl might do, but she 's a brunette, and he 's dark, so it would be time wasted."

"Then the list is limited to the blondes and the reds," said I.

Lady Pat made no reply, but appeared lost in thought.

"Rhona 's red," she presently remarked.

"Who 's Rhona?" I asked.

"Why, Rhona Meynell, the actress."

"You would n't marry him to her!" I exclaimed



with genuine surprise, for family pride ran high in the Kilmore family.

"I don't know so much. She's a rare good girl. I've known her for some years now. She often comes to our house, and visits several good people. Her brother's in the army, you know. 'T would n't be such a bad match, if we could only get her to fall in with the idea; and I might be able to bring them together. She always takes two months' holiday in the summer."

"But where? And will you get Maurice to spend the summer with you?"

To this double-barrelled question Lady Pat, stroking her pug Ben the while, demurely replied that if she put it to Maurice that it was his duty before going into absolute retirement to spend the last few months with his brother and sister-in-law, she thought she could at least work upon his feelings to the extent of inducing him to devote August to them. As to "Where," Pat talked of hiring a yacht for Cowes week, and she thought there could be no better place for making up a match.

"Is Rhona Meynell a good sailor?" I asked. "The sight of a leadenish pea-green young lady, with red hair, dank and straightened by the salt water, is not conducive to affection on the part of the male sex."

"Faith! She ought to be," said Lady Pat, "for she was rolling about in old Colonel Higgins's tub of a steam-yacht between Falmouth and the Needles for six weeks last summer; and if she could stand

that, she could stand anything. Well, now, what do you think of it? Will we pull off the event?"

"If I may also adopt the metaphor of the race-course, I should say that Lady Kilmore will ride to win, and will most certainly pull off the event if anyone can."

"I will go and see Rhona at once," said my charming visitor. "But there was another thing I wanted to speak about. Ye know that man Dan Coey?"

"The company-promoter?"

"Yes, that same. He's got hold of Pat, and is making him Director of some mining things or other. Pat says it has put £5,000 into his pocket already. The man seems loyal to his friends—does little deals for them if they support him in his ventures. But I don't like the business. What d'ye think about it?"

Sir Patrick Kilmore and I were at Trinity Hall together, rowed in the same boat at Henley, and had been friends ever since, but I none the less felt most reluctant to interfere in his financial affairs. The family estate in Tipperary (Lady Pat was of the same county) was yielding but a small income, and if Pat could make a few thousands honestly in the City, through Coey or otherwise, and do those repairs to his baronial hall and buy the much required furniture, why should n't he? I expressed these views to Lady Pat, but she only shook her head.

"Supposing Coey's Company is a mere swindle,"

said she, "and a lot of unfortunate people put their money into it because they know Pat to be one of the Directors, and an honest man who would n't knowingly be connected with anything shady?"

"But are the companies swindles, that is the question?"

"Faith! I don't know," said Lady Pat, "and what's more, Pat does n't know either. He can't even add up an hotel bill correctly. He's a mere baby in their hands. Tell me, now, what are the uses of Directors? Certainly, Pat does n't direct anything, for he knows nothing of gold-mines, glass-making, nor bicycle-gears, and he's in three of them."

"But Coey mixes in very good society," said I. "I should think he's all right." I spoke honestly and innocently enough, for this history commences in days when to be in society was usually considered the hall-mark of an honest man.

"Ah, well," said Lady Pat, "we will see. But I hoped ye would have given Pat a word of advice. If ye hear anything about the companies, perhaps ye'll let me know, so that I may get him off the Boards in time. What's this case Pat's witness in? I'm coming down to the Old Bailey on Tuesday to hear him give evidence. Imagine Pat in the witness-box!"

"It will be stern reality," said I, smiling, "but he won't have a very bad time. It's the case of a man named King selling a mine in South Africa which did not exist. Half-a-dozen of the defrauded

shareholders have clubbed together to prosecute him for the swindle."

"But what's Pat got to do with it?"

"Why, a glowing report of the prospects of the mine, drafted by an engineer named Tompkins, was laid before the shareholders. Tompkins was all the time in London, and beyond question never saw the mine at all. Pat accidentally stumbled across him in a restaurant. We must have Pat's evidence, as we have been unable to find anyone else who saw Tompkins in London when according to his own account he was in Africa taking stock of the supposed mine."

"Seems Pat's getting in with some pretty blackguards," said the lady, bluntly. "You'd be doing me and him a real service by telling him so. But there, I won't bother ye any more now. Good-bye, Lucas! Benista! Wake up!" And with a pug under each arm, she walked lightly out of the room and sailed down the staircase. At Ruth Pinch's fountain she thoughtfully stopped to give her dear doggies a lap of water.

As she passed down the broad stone steps by the side of the Middle Temple Gardens on the way to her brougham, which was in waiting near the Embankment, barristers and barristers' clerks, solicitors, and even sedate old Q. C.'s all turned their heads to admire this pleasant vision which Pat, with his usual good taste in such matters, had imported from the wilds of "ould Tipperary."



CHAPTER II

THE SOLICITOR FOR THE PROSECUTION

I WAS aroused from my pleasant reverie by Aaron, who announced deferentially, but with somewhat of a grievance in his tone, that Mr. Sharpe had been waiting to see me for ten minutes.

“ Show him in, by all means,” said I.

There entered a short, thin, ferrety-faced man with a scanty crop of straw-coloured hair, insufficient white eyelashes surrounding his small, pale, reddish eyes. This was Messrs. Seale and Engrosyer's new partner, who had introduced a city connection, with the result that the firm was waxing rich and powerful. I fancied that my old friends, the senior partners, who for years had done little else than draw wills and conveyances for their family connection, were at first a little apprehensive of launching out into this new line of business. But as Mr. Engrosyer said to me confidentially after dinner one day, “ Even we lawyers must live, Mr. Gilbert, and I should like to know what we are to live on when anyone who wants to make a will can buy a form for sixpence at the nearest law-stationer's. Talk about a lawyer's profits, indeed! Why,

a man came to me to-day to swear an affidavit. He spluttered ink over a brand-new pair of trousers I was wearing, made me initial twenty-five corrections, kept me talking about the blessed thing for a quarter of an hour, and then paid me his one-and-sixpence, which I have to share with my two partners."

Mr. Sharpe was a man of quite another type, and certainly did not belie his name. I thought it desirable to tell him I had been detained by Lady Kilmore, an old friend, and wife of one of the witnesses in our case.

"Indeed! Very singular," said Mr. Sharpe, washing his hands with imaginary soap and water. "And, pray, what did the good lady think of the case?"

"Lady Kilmore expressed no opinion," said I, rather coolly, for the question was clearly put to ascertain if I had been letting her into the secrets of my brief. "She came to see me on quite another matter—a family affair."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Mr. Sharpe again. "Her ladyship is very handsome, they say."

"Is there anything fresh in the case?" I asked, taking no notice of the remark.

"Well, to tell you the truth," said the lawyer, shaking his head and putting on a disconsolate look, "my firm has very great doubts as to whether we shall be able to obtain a verdict in our favour."

"Why, the evidence is as strong as strong can be!" I exclaimed.

"Certainly it is, according to the proofs of the witnesses," admitted Mr. Sharpe; "but will they stand their cross-examination, that's the question? Now, there's your friend, Sir Patrick Kilmore. In our office he was unable to say to a fortnight, with absolute certainty, the date on which he saw Tompkins, the engineer, in London. You know what will happen in Court. He will be asked on his oath if he knows the date within three weeks, and very likely, not being an expert witness, he will say he does not. And then it will be put to the jury that a man who cannot fix a date within three weeks has such a poor memory that his evidence is not to be relied on. But," and he glanced at me, nervously I thought, "we have had a telegram from a man in Africa, which puts a very different aspect on the case. Here it is."

His hand trembled slightly as he handed me the message. It was addressed to his firm, and in effect stated that the sender, who was then leaving for England, had been clerk to the solicitors who sold the land to King. The alleged mine was not even in a gold-bearing district, and the land was sold for £20, for agricultural purposes. Moreover, not a single shaft had been sunk, nor any attempt made to find gold. The sender of the telegram was willing to give evidence.

"Now, can we do without such a witness as that?" said Mr. Sharpe, looking at me keenly.

"But he won't be here in time," said I. "The trial is fixed for Wednesday."



"Yes, I know," said the solicitor; "but the prosecution is a very important one; a large number of shareholders are interested in it. We have to protect the—ah—morality of the City. We are doing public work, Mr. Gilbert, and failure would be most disastrous. It is my opinion, and also, I may say, the opinion of my partners, that we should obtain an adjournment of the trial on the grounds of this important witness being expected from Africa. I suppose the other side will want their man bailed out," he added, after a pause, "and we can't very well refuse it, as there is nothing definite known against him beyond this charge."

"We should hardly be in a position to oppose his release on bail, and the scamp might bolt," I objected.

"But you could easily get the Judge to fix the bail at a high figure," urged the solicitor, "and it is not likely that anyone would come forward. Our man would remain in custody safe enough."

"Then you really wish me to ask for an adjournment, Mr. Sharpe?"

"Yes, we do," said the lawyer. "I shall be in Court myself, and, if necessary, can go into the box and state on oath the necessity of our having this new witness."

"By the way, have you found out anything more about King's antecedents?" I asked, as the lawyer rose to go.

"No, nothing in particular. For the past two years he has had an office in Lombard Street, where

he seems to have carried on a good deal of financial business of one sort and another. Few people saw him, everything being done through the medium of one or two clerks. In fact, he does n't seem to have been often at his office. He is a great invalid, I should say; paralysed on one side, with one of those yellow complexions which men have when the bile goes the wrong way. Good afternoon, Mr. Gilbert! Remember, you ask for an adjournment; and of course we cannot object to the man being admitted to bail; but it must be for a—ah—good round sum. Good day!—ha! ha!—a good round sum—a thousand or two, and we know what will happen then."

He had reached my anteroom when I called him back.

"By the way, Mr. Sharpe," said I, "you know a good deal of what is going on in the financial world. There are one or two companies I feel a little interested in just now; would you mind giving me your opinion on them?"

"Certainly," said the lawyer, reëntering the room and carefully closing the door. "Which are they?"

"First of all, there is the Great Washa Prospecting Trust."

"You might expect me to know something about that," he said, colouring slightly, "for we are—ah—solicitors to the Company."

"I did not know it."

"No? To tell you the truth, we have but little

knowledge of its prospects. Of course, we only deal with the legal business—promotion, and—ah—so forth. But Mr. Coey is in it, you know, and that means a great deal. Wonderful financial genius, Mr. Coey. Everything is being done on the most liberal scale.”

“But would you advise anybody to invest in it?”

“Well—I”—he put his head on one side and rubbed his chin with his fingers, reflectively—“you must regard it, of course, as a—ah—speculative investment—certainly speculative.”

“And there is the Natana Gold Mine. What of that?”

“That is another of—ah—Mr. Coey’s companies. He is a man in whom we have every confidence. Of course, our firm would not be connected with anything at all—ah—second-rate.”

“And are you in that also?”

“Yes; we are its solicitors.”

“But would you advise anyone to invest in it—any friend, you know?”

Mr. Sharpe seemed very ill at ease, and finally jerked out, “Well, Mr. Gilbert, strictly between ourselves, as between two professional men, I think we must also regard that mine as speculative. It may turn up trumps, of course; but there is always great risk in any of these—ah—ventures. At any rate, we hope for the best. You understand me?”

I thought I did understand him and questioned



him in similar fashion concerning the third company in which my friend Kilmore was interested—one to manufacture and sell a new kind of gearing for bicycles. This also, it seemed, was one of the Great Financier's companies with which Mr. Sharpe was professionally connected. As to this one, all he could tell me was, that in the opinion of several professional cyclists who had been consulted on the subject, the invention was a good one, but whether the public would buy it or not, it was impossible to say. Our conversation came to an end and he hurried off.

Mr. Sharpe's manner throughout our conference had been somewhat peculiar, his usual self-assurance having given way to evident nervousness. Why should he be nervous about the adjournment of this case? I pondered. It was an everyday piece of legal business; and even if we went into Court without the evidence of the witness from abroad we were practically certain to convict the defendant, the proofs of his guilt were so ample. I had formed the conclusion, from words which had been let fall by certain friends of mine on the Stock Exchange, that King had been carrying on this little game for some considerable time, but always so skilfully as to avoid any personal responsibility for his frauds. The law of Limited Liability Companies teemed, and alas! still teems, with paths of escape for such men as he. I had no wish to be brought to London for any portion of the Long Vacation, and would much have preferred to have had the case decided on the

Wednesday, or following day, though the adjournment meant additional fees and law costs both for myself and Mr. Sharpe's firm. However, my instructions were clear enough, and I could not reasonably object to carrying them out.



CHAPTER III

THE DAY OF TRIAL

It appeared to me hardly desirable to read in open Court the telegram we had received from Africa; and yet without doing so I felt that our application to adjourn the case might very reasonably be opposed in the strongest possible fashion. The defence would naturally be undesirous of giving us time to call additional witnesses to strengthen our case against their man. After being much perplexed on this point, I determined to take the somewhat unusual course of seeing the Judge privately before the trial commenced, showing him the telegram, and explaining exactly how matters stood. In this there was no difficulty.

I arrived at that dingy building, the Old Bailey, better known now as the Central Criminal Court, twenty minutes before the opening of the business, and sending up my card to the Judge, at once received the reply that he would be happy to see me in his private room.

Mr. Justice Blakeney was a tall, heavy-faced, sleepy-looking man with bushy black whiskers such as were worn by most footmen a quarter of a century ago; a man with an impassive, Sphinx-like face.

The story went of him that, happening to overhear two juniors discussing whether or no he was the plainest of the Judges, he quietly remarked, to their great confusion, "I trust, gentlemen, you have taken into consideration the claims of my brother Rolles to that distinction," Rolles being anything but a beauty.

"What do you wish to see me about?" he said, hardly raising his sleepy-looking eyes.

"*Regina v. King.*' At the last minute we have a telegram from a most important witness in Africa. I shall have to ask for an adjournment, but——"

"What is the case about?"

"The sale of a non-existent gold-mine."

"Oh, yes, I know. I have looked through the depositions. You hardly want any further evidence; the case appears to me a strong one as it stands."

"But the defence may prove equally strong, and——"

"Let me see the telegram," said the Judge; and I showed it to him.

"Ask for an adjournment in the usual way."

"I did not think it desirable to read this telegram in Court," I ventured.

"I must leave that to your discretion, Mr. Gilbert."

"Very well, my Lord! But, as to bail? I was about to——"

"That also will be decided in open Court. Good morning! I must look through this pile of depositions before the cases are called on."



On the way up to the robing-room I passed Aaron Rodd, who had charge of my robes.

"You have only Mr. Hinks against you," said he. "It does n't look as if there was much money on the other side."

Hinks was a junior Counsel of about three years, standing, a lisping youth, the lines of whose chin and forehead, if continued, would have formed a very obtuse angle. It was certainly curious that a man who was supposed to have made many thousands in the City should not have retained Counsel of greater standing and experience.

The trial was to take place in the principal Court, the stage where one act, at least, of many a terrible tragedy has been played. The Judge had not entered when I took my place facing the jury in the centre of the large square room, in the seats allotted to Counsel. The bench was on my right, the dock on my left, while the jury were in front of me, sitting in semi-obscurity under the great window which cast a Rembrandt effect of light and shade on judge, counsel, and prisoner.

My learned friend, Mr. Hinks, was in Court before me, nervously looking through his brief, and anxiously bending over the desk from time to time to consult with the solicitor for the defence, who was at the table on the floor of the Court.

There was a slight rustle, and Lady Pat entered through the door used by the sheriffs. And then the whole Court seemed to lighten as there came in after her a divinely beautiful girl of about twenty-



two or three, dressed almost entirely in white. She was past the average height of women, fair as a lily, regal in her manner and bearing. Her appearance was so striking, so brilliant, that there arose a general murmur of surprise and admiration.

Lady Pat caught my eye and beckoned to me.

"Mr. Gilbert," she said, when I had pushed my way past my brother barristers, and stood up by the Clerk of Arraignment, "I'd like to introduce ye to the Princess Corine, a dear young friend of mine. She has never been in a Court of Law before, so I brought her this morning to hear poor Pat cross-examined."

I looked, and the glance she gave me out of her brilliant violet eyes almost took my breath away. Never before had I seen such a lovely creature.

"I think you know Mr. Coey," continued Lady Pat, and I noticed—for until then I had seen nothing but this beautiful woman—a stout, florid, vulgar-looking man standing by her. It was the Great Financier.

Before we had time to exchange a word, there was a cry of "Silence in Court," the hum of conversation was suddenly hushed, and Lady Pat and her convoy retired swiftly to their seat on the dais by the Sheriff. I, of course, hurried back to my proper place to give the usual formal bow to that whiskered Sphinx, Mr. Justice Blakeney, who made his appearance through a door on the right, entered into occupation of the Seat of Judgment,

and straightway plunged into the business of the day.

"Jury sworn?" said he, bending over his desk to the Clerk of Arraignment.

"Yes, my Lord."

"What is the first case?"

"'Regina v. King.' Your Lordship has the depositions."

A second later a singular-looking man, accompanied by a policeman and a warder, came slowly up the steps from the cells below, limping, and walking with the assistance of a stick, and stood in the front of the dock with his eyes cast down. He had hardly the appearance of a sharp City swindler. A tall man, but stooping, with a pitiable expression on his yellowish face, owing to a trembling underlip and his mouth being slightly drawn on one side. In his left hand he carried an ear-trumpet which he kept to his ear throughout the proceedings. Notwithstanding the paralytic distortion, there was a breadth about his forehead, and a fierceness in his rough, shaggy eyebrows, which gave a certain amount of power to the upper part of his face. His eyes, which were perhaps somewhat too close together, I could not see, for, as I have said, he kept them fixed on the ground. He had dark, scanty whiskers, streaked with grey, growing from his ears and under his chin. Otherwise, he was clean-shaven. His strong-looking, coarse black hair was parted in the middle, and rose up slightly on either side of the parting.

“ You appear for the prosecution, Mr. Gilbert ? ”
said the Judge, looking at me.

“ Yes, my Lord.”

“ And I appear for the d-d-defence,” stammered out my young friend, jumping up nervously, and speaking in a shrill, piping voice which caused a slight titter in the gloomy public gallery which is hidden away in semi-darkness near the ceiling and over the dock. I thought I even detected a fleeting smile on the face of the prisoner.

“ What ’s his name ? ” said Mr. Justice Blakeney, in an offensively audible whisper to the Clerk of Arraignment.

The colour rose to the face of my learned friend, who hastened to inform the Court that it was Hinks, which Mr. Justice Blakeney, in the manner of Judges from Mr. Justice Stareleigh onwards, first mispronounced and secondly misspelt in his notes, thereby materially increasing the confusion of the unfortunate young Counsel. I then made my application for an adjournment, which threw poor Mr. Hinks into a state of greater perturbation than ever, and his little head in its very nice new wig went bobbing down repeatedly towards the solicitor’s table.

“ Now, Mr. Higgins, what have *you* to say ? ”
asked Mr. Justice Blakeney.

“ Well, my Lord!—er—I am instructed to say—that is to say, the solicitor tells me that we have a full answer to this charge, and my client has been in custody for some weeks now, and we—er—— ” He



came to a full stop, and again his wig bobbed down in the direction of the solicitor.

"Well, Mr. Higgins?" said the Judge, getting impatient.

"Hinks, if your L-L-Lordship pleases. I—er—that is to say, we—er—think, my Lord, if the case is adjourned the prisoner should be released on bail. We are quite ready to go on, and have a perfect answer to the charge."

"The bail should be a substantial one," said I. "The case is of public importance and the offence very serious. I must respectfully urge that the prisoner be not released unless he can find bail to the amount of at least two thousand pounds."

"Will that suit you, Mr. Binks?" asked the Judge.

"Hinks, my Lord," again corrected my learned friend, and again his wig bobbed down, and there was a long consultation. Mr. Justice Blakeney's impatience increased, and finally I heard him say to the Clerk of Arraignment, "If *they* don't know, ask the prisoner whether he can find anyone."

The Clerk of Arraignment stood up and addressed the cripple in the dock. "Can you find two persons to be securities for your reappearance in the sum of one thousand pounds each?"

"I cannot say. I think so," said King, in a low voice, for the first time raising his eyes to the Bench, and taking a quick glance round the Court.

At that instant there was an exclamation from Lady Kilmore, and a woman in the gallery cried

out, "Oh! She's fainted!" Looking up, I saw that the Princess Corine was lying back, with her face deadly pale, her eyes closed, and Lady Pat's arm around her. The incident caused a commotion of a few seconds only, for the poor girl was at once carried out into the Judge's private room. The door had hardly closed on her before the learned, whiskered Sphinx informed the confused, unwhiskered Hinks (may I be forgiven; but forensic humour is not always so brilliant as is generally supposed) that, subject to anything that might be said by Counsel, he intended to adjourn the case until the September Sessions.

While the Judge was speaking, Mr. Coey, who had been writing rapidly in his note-book, gave a piece of paper twisted up to the Clerk of Arraignment, who handed it to Mr. Hinks, who after reading it passed it on to the solicitor instructing him, who forthwith rose from his seat, went to the dock, and, being short, stood on tiptoe, handed it to the prisoner, and conversed with him in low tones.

"We can find bail, my Lord," said my friend.

"Very well," said the Judge; "the prisoner must also enter into recognisances in five thousand pounds to surrender to take his trial at the September Sessions. Call on the next case."

Having endorsed my brief "Adjourned until the September Sessions," I hurried out of Court, and quickly made my way round to the Judge's private room to inquire after the Princess. I found her there being fanned vigorously by Lady Pat, who



was using a copy of the *Law Times* for the purpose. Meanwhile the Great Financier proffered brandy.

"The excitement of the affair was too much for the poor girl," said Lady Pat, sympathetically. "Let's get out of this horrid, stuffy, gloomy place, Lucas. Ah, now! Can't ye take us and Mr. Coey to lunch somewhere?"

"Delighted!" said I; "only wait until I have got rid of my robes."

This was a matter of a couple of minutes, and very soon we were in Lady Pat's comfortable carriage, where Ben and Benista had been anxiously awaiting her. A strange change had come over the face of Lady Pat's beautiful Princess. The calm, quiet, dignified look in her deep violet eyes had given way to a fixed, half-frightened expression, which I accounted for by the combined effect of the Majesty of the law and the Terrors of the Old Bailey on a very sensitive organisation. She was evidently much overwrought.

"Faith! I'm glad Prince Rozan is away," said Lady Pat, "or I don't know what he would say to me for taking you into such a place, upsetting you like this. When might ye be expecting him back?"

"Oh! I don't know. Soon. Perhaps to-morrow—any time, now," said the Princess.

She spoke in a low, musical voice, but I detected in it evidence of the excitement under which she had been, and still appeared to be, labouring.

"The yacht will be in this week," said Coey. "It was only yesterday Rothschild told me he

wanted to see the Prince as soon as possible; so I sent a wire to Havre, where the *Lorelei* was expected yesterday. You ought to have been with your father, Princess; you would have enjoyed Trouville."

"Yes, I should have—enjoyed Trouville," the girl answered; but she spoke absently, as if hardly knowing the meaning of what she said.

"No you would n't, my dear," cried Lady Pat. "It's shockingly delightful certainly, but— 'Pon my honour, Mr. Coey," and she turned abruptly to the Great Financier, "I can't for the life of me picture you in a Trouville bathing-suit."

Mr. Coey appeared to find no point in the remark. "You're not likely to see it, my Lady," he said, bluntly.

Thus talking we drove rapidly down Ludgate Hill. Ben, on Princess Corine's lap, looked out one side of the carriage; Benista, nursed by Lady Pat, looked out on the other; while many a gallant young merchant, stock-jobber, broker, clerk, and other citizens, took quick passing glances in at the lovely occupants of our carriage; from which phrase I of course exclude the Great Financier and the Counsel for the prosecution in "*Regina v. King*."



CHAPTER IV

A MATTER OF TASTE

THERE is in Bond Street, over a fashionable bonnet-shop, a tiny restaurant which serves to augment a pittance of £650 a year paid by a certain duke, well known in sporting circles, to his *chef*. Perhaps not more than a couple of hundred people know of its existence, and these jealously guard their secret, for the cookery is of such an exquisite and refined description, the wines are of such rare vintages, and the appointments are all so perfect, that to vulgarise the place by making it popular would be an offence of considerable magnitude.

There are no waiters to blow down your neck as they place the plate in front of you, but dainty damsels, dressed all in white, whose only adornments beyond their rosy lips and bright eyes are the gopherings and frills beloved of French *blanchisseuses*, trip lightly and silently over the soft Persian rugs, and minister to the wants of the elect. There is no noise, no bustle, no draughts, nor even a glaring contrast of colour in the decorations of the dainty rooms, one of which I believe was, as a matter of fact, carefully copied from the Duchess of R——'s

boudoir at the Duke's place in Gloucestershire. Whether the Duke knows of his *chef's* little establishment, I cannot say. Probably he has heard of it, but rather than lose the almost priceless services of that divinely gifted Frenchman, Monsieur Legros, he winks at the little business which is being carried on. It has been said that the Duke himself is the proprietor of the beneficent institution; but I have reason to know that the story was prompted by spite, though it can hardly be called calumny, for to be the owner of such a place is to be the benefactor of that portion of society which occasionally has to lunch or dine abroad. More than one of our European royalties has endeavoured to seduce M. Legros from his post; but the republican Frenchman, perhaps preferring the higher salary of a duke to the higher honour of being an emperor's cook, is staunch and true to his Grace of K——.

An hour or so after the scene in the Old Bailey, the Princess Corine, Lady Kilmore, the Great Financier, and myself were sitting in M. Legros' super-eminent restaurant. Of the four of us, Lady Pat was the only one who really seemed to enjoy her luncheon. The Princess sat silent and sad, evidently still feeling the effects of the shock occasioned by her visit to the Old Bailey. Coey treated the artistic productions of M. Legros' staff with disdain, and grumbled because they could give him no cold beef.

As for myself, being then thirty-two, and having, therefore, arrived at full years of discretion, I would, on any other occasion, have eaten thankfully and



appreciatively, and blessed the good gods for having produced this dainty banquet worthy of Lucullus. But on that July day, what we ate or drank I do not know; for never was man more completely knocked over by the sight of lovely face than I by this foreign beauty seated opposite to me. I had seen her face vivacious and bright as she glided regally into the dim Court; it was difficult then to imagine how a woman could be more attractive. But now, in her plaintive sadness, she looked like an angel dropped from Heaven. I, Lucas Gilbert, a hard-headed barrister, the man about town, who, in his vacations, usually joined a few men of similar tastes to himself and cruised about between the different ports of the West Country—I, who by my friends was regarded as rapidly growing into a confirmed old bachelor, and, if not a woman-hater, at least a consistent neglecter of the fair sex—here was I suddenly smitten with love at first sight, just like any foolish boy in his teens.

It would have been a dull luncheon party indeed had it not been for Lady Pat, who rattled along in her charming Irish brogue, apparently caring little if she was answered or not. I am afraid my Irish readers may say I am doing my old friend an injustice by making her speech so distinctive of the Sister Isle. I never met an Irish man or woman yet, of the better classes, who would admit that they had a brogue or even the slightest Irish accent. As a matter of fact, those of them—there are many since rents became difficult to collect—who pass the

greater portion of their lives in the rural parts of Ireland, rarely coming to England, and only paying a visit of a few weeks in the year to Dublin, almost invariably possess a more or less strong accent, which varies in its characteristics according to the county. Lady Pat had, up to the age of eighteen, lived altogether in her father's house in Tipperary, mixing freely with the tenants, and having a worthy old Irish woman as nurse. Thus, she became constitutionally imbrogued, if I may invent a new expression, but however much she might resent the imputation, her manner of speech was, to English ears, only an addition to her many charms of manner and disposition.

Brogue is regarded in Ireland as simply the speech of the vulgar, and I tremble for myself when Lady Pat comes to read these pages. However, I hope she and all others will understand that whenever the word "brogue" occurs, it is used in the English sense only, and is merely intended to suggest the most charming and pretty inflexion of accent imaginable.

"Sure, you 're not taking the Moselle, Mr. Coey," said Lady Pat. "There 's a bouquet to it which almost makes me fancy I 'm back in the old garden in Tipperary."

The Great Financier said he preferred beer.

As I could not decently be staring at Princess Corine the whole time we were at table, I had some opportunity of noticing our big City gun. Hitherto I had only met him once or twice at people's houses



in the evening, when he had been dressed much as other men, exhibiting, however, a partiality for large diamond shirt-studs. But then, in a man possessing, or reputed to possess, something over three millions, these little characteristics can reasonably be overlooked. Now I saw him in his City garb, for he had driven to the Court straight from his office. I supposed he was brought there having at some time or other had business relations with the man King, and feeling interested in his fate, or, more likely, in the fate of monies owing to him. He was short, stout, and florid, with fat cheeks, a well-defined double chin, prominent washed-out blue eyes, and scanty eyelashes. Though, I should say, over forty, he had not yet succeeded in producing more than an embryonic moustache, the needle-like ends of which were carefully waxed and twisted. On each side of his fat face was a fringe of sandy whiskers. The ordinary stand-up collar of the period would have choked him—at least, so I conjectured—so he wore one turned down, with a made-up sailor's-knot through which was stabbed a large and superfluous horseshoe diamond pin. On the third finger of his left hand he wore a large, solitary diamond which appeared even greater than it was, owing to a very light gold setting. Through his buttonhole was stuck a silver tube containing two cream roses. These were set off by silver leaves which served to keep the tube in its place and increase the magnificence of its owner.

A massive gold cable-chain connected Mr. Coey's

two distant waistcoat pockets. He was, I suppose, short-sighted, for he wore, even when eating, a gold pince-nez which was chained to his coat by a line of thin silver links. His umbrella bore several gold adornments; his coat was black and sleek, and his trousers black, with silk stripes in them. There may have been gold nails in the heels of his boots, for all I knew to the contrary. I did not examine that portion of his attire. This description may seem far-fetched. I can only solemnly asseverate that the sketch was made from life and is photographic in its accuracy.

"I hate these snippety French dishes," said the Great Financier when he had ceased eating, and coffee was brought. "There 's nothing like cold beef for lunch. Did your Ladyship ever try a piece of boiled bacon and greens, the greens done in the same pot as the bacon? It 's first chop, I can tell you. There 's my friend, Rothschild; he 's a man who can have anything he pleases; he was telling me only the other day that there was nothing he liked better than plain living—a cut from a good honest joint—cut and come again, you know. You'd be all the stronger, Princess, if you got a little beef into you."

The odious man! I felt as if I could have punched his head.

"Faith! If ye like plain living, Mr. Coey," said Lady Pat, "I would just like to take ye to Ireland next time I go, and give ye a couple of weeks with one of me father's tinants. It 's little they have



but potatoes and buttermilk, with, maybe, a herring on Sundays, and stirabout for the children. It 's little meat they taste, I can tell you."

" Oh, they 're savages," said Coey, whereat Lady Pat flared up on behalf of her people, and told him that the tenants' children were as fine, strapping boys and girls as anyone could wish to see.

To turn the conversation, I asked Coey if he knew of a yacht to let, as Lady Pat was wanting one for August.

" I 'll ask Lord Dunkerley," said he; " he 's on one of my Boards. I put five thou' into his pocket only yesterday, and he owes me one for that. His steam-yacht 's about five hundred tons. Would that be big enough, Lady Kilmore ? "

" Is it big enough! Imagine! Why, it 's about five times too big, Mr. Coey. What would we be wanting with a huge steamship like that ? Find us something a little smaller, if you please. You 'll come with us for a cruise, Lucas," said she, turning to me. " I never feel quite safe alone with Pat, for he 's a mere baby in the skipper's hands, and if the skipper should drink too much, as those sailors do sometimes, where would we be ? "

" I have to get back for this confounded trial," said I; " but I would be delighted to manage a fortnight or three weeks with you, if you could arrange to put me ashore anywhere in England or Scotland before the September Sittings. That scamp has spoilt all my arrangements for the Long Vacation."

" Ah, well," said Lady Pat, " you young barristers don't come off very badly in the matter of holidays. You look as if some sea breezes would do you good. Corine, dear! Are you feeling better now ? "

" It is so hot in here," said the Princess, leaning back in her chair. " The smell of those lilies is overpowering. They make me feel faint. Would you mind me going home ? "

" Perhaps it would be best, dear," said Lady Pat ; " but unfortunately I told John not to bring the carriage until three o'clock."

" Shall I call a cab, Princess, and see you home ? " said Coey.

" Yes, that is the best way," decided Lady Pat ; and a minute later my divinity and the Great Financier had left us.

" It 's very strange," said my friend, " how weak some of those strong-looking young women are. It must be the late hours they keep in London, Lucas, and the want of more fresh air. I 'll get Corine to learn bicycle-riding, and we will have some runs together. I can't get half the exercise I want in this lazy place. Well, now, it 's a pity Corine being so upset. I wanted to have a quiet chat with that man."

" What! Coey ? "

" Yes. Were n't you surprised at my bringing him to lunch ? "

" Oh, I only thought you were doing the civil to Pat's brother Director."



"Well, to tell you the truth," said Lady Pat, confidentially, "I was anxious to see what he was like, and to get him to talk about these companies he has put Pat into. Is n't he detestably vulgar? I can't for the life of me understand Prince Rozan making a friend of such a man."

"I would rather lunch with an East End Coster. He, at least, has some poetry in his composition, according to Chevalier."

"D' ye know," said Lady Pat, "I always find that these aggressively vulgar people, however rich they may be, never have any conscience. A mere labourer, who eats peas with a knife, and drops his 'h's,' if he is a good fellow at heart is n't really vulgar—there's a sort of natural refinement about him, and a sensitiveness in the matter of other people's feelings, that stamps him at once as one of Nature's gentlemen. But as for that Coey, he is——" And Lady Pat threw up her hands, not finding words strong enough to express her feelings on the subject. "Did ye hear what he said about Lord Dunkerley? Pat told me the poor young man lost heavily on the Oaks, and now he has fallen into Coey's clutches."

"But, my dear Lady Pat," I protested. "Surely they are not such very dreadful clutches to fall into, if they put five thousand pounds into the distressed nobleman's pockets."

"But where does the money come from?" she urged. "Is n't it a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul?"

“ Why, Coey finds it, I suppose.”

“ Ah, Lucas! It 's a simple man ye are ”; and she shook her head at me. “ Did ye ever really think that *Peter* Coey would allow himself to be robbed to pay *Paul* Dunkerley ? No, the money comes out of the pockets of the idiots who invest in Coey's companies, that 's the long and the short of it. There 's my husband, now. He says he made two thousand yesterday, and I know perfectly well he could no more make two thousand on the Stock Exchange than invent a flying-machine. I told him so, and he said it was all through Coey. Coey had done another little deal for him. I told Pat flat, that if ever the day came when the poor widows and clergymen who had put their savings into these companies came pointing their fingers at him, and crying, ‘ We have lost our little fortunes because we thought you were an honest man, and would n't belong to a thing that was a swindle,’ why I 'd leave him, and go back to Tipperary, I 'd be so ashamed of him.”

Lady Pat was finely indignant. “ I have been talking to Pat about Rhona,” she said presently, having cooled a little.

“ What are his views about the Rubens-red young lady ? ”

“ Faith ! He does n't like the idea of Maurice marrying her.”

“ Well,” said I, “ considering that she has not met Maurice, and Maurice has n't seen her, and Maurice is about to take vows to remain a celibate



for the rest of his life, I should venture to say that——”

“ The odds are on the field.”

“ Exactly.”

“ But did n't ye tell me the other day in your chambers that I would ride to win, and you 'd back me to pull off the event ?”

“ True, I did.”

“ Well, I 'll tell ye what I 've done. I 've explained to Pat that it 's not altogether a question of Maurice marrying, but of becoming sufficiently interested in a pretty girl to show him that life without women would be—what shall I say ?”

“ A mistake ?”

“ Yes, a mistake. So I 've just taken Rhona into me confidence and told her that she 's to come with us this summer, and make it her duty to instil proper principles into the mind of my deluded brother-in-law. Pat thinks we can keep a careful watch, and before the affair goes too far——”

“ That is to say, if the affair goes too far.”

“ Nonsense, with your ' if's '! Rhona can twist any man round her little finger if you give her her head and a clear course.”

“ Let us say, before the affair goes too far, then. What is going to be done ?”

“ Why, we 'll just separate them.”

“ It 's a pretty little plot,” said I, “ but I don't quite see where I come in.”

“ Oh, you 'll be most useful!” exclaimed Lady Pat, enthusiastically. “ Rhona will use you to

make Maurice jealous. There 's nothing like a little stimulant of that kind."

"And I am to be the stimulant! You speak words of wisdom arising out of full experience."

"Well, now! I give you me word," said Lady Pat, "that when Pat was courting me, Teddy O'Brien, me cousin, who was awfully fond of me, and proposed half-a-dozen times, was really of the greatest assistance. My mama wanted to forbid him the house; but he was a nice boy, and made Pat desperately jealous and loving—but there! that 's all over now. What ye have to do, Lucas, is to find us a yacht; and remember, you have promised to come with us and keep the skipper in order."

"And stimulate Maurice!"

One of the daintily attired waitresses here intimated that Lady Kilmore's carriage was waiting for her, so taking up Benista from the cosy chair by her side, where the pugs had been enjoying a mutton cutlet, and giving me Ben to carry, Lady Pat led the way downstairs.

"Can I be taking ye anywhere?" she said as she put a dainty foot on the carriage-step.

"No, thanks! I 'm off to the nearest yacht agency. I think there 's one in Pall Mall."

"Sure, I 'm giving ye a great deal of trouble."

"Not the least," I assured her.

"Is there anything I can do for ye, Lucas?"

"No!—Yes! You can get me a card for Prince Rozan's on the 9th."



"Imagine!" exclaimed Lady Pat, smiling down upon me significantly; "and you used to say you hated a crush."

"So I do, but—" and I checked myself.

"Faith! I admire your taste. Benista, you'll be out of the carriage. Home, John!"

CHAPTER V

RHONA

IT happened that, a day or two after the luncheon at Legros', I had to call on a cousin of mine, an artist, in connection with some trustee business. It is one of the objections to the law as a profession, or, at least, to the higher branch of it, that the whole of one's family connexions, near and remote, appear to regard their barrister relation, be he brother or even cousin many times removed, as legal adviser in chief. The honorarium for such services is usually limited to a day's shooting, a brace of birds, grateful thanks, or ungrateful abuse, varying in a direct ratio, in the case of trust property, with the amount of dividend.

My cousin Claude was the most unbusinesslike man imaginable. "For goodness' sake, don't bother me with any law papers, old chap," he would say. "Give me a safe six per cent. That's all I want." Modest fellow!

"Not at home, sir," was the reply of the old housekeeper who opened the artist's front door to me in Bloomsbury; "but we are expecting him



in directly. Won't you go up into the studio? There's no one there, except a lady waiting to give him a sitting."

"No, I don't think I had better——"

"It's Miss Meynell, sir."

"Then of course I will go up"; and a minute later I was being greeted by the charming actress herself.

Imagine—to use one of Lady Pat's favourite exclamations—a graceful young woman of some twenty-five years, with a pale, transparent complexion, slightly freckled, a rather full mouth, bow-shaped,—Cupid's bow, I mean,—a delicately moulded tip-tilted nose, a wealth of Rubens-red hair, and a merry, deep blue eye. In the day when briefs were few and far between, I had benefited by my enthusiasm for matters theatrical by becoming dramatic critic to the *Daily Post*, and this position had brought me into contact with a great many members of the profession. In fact I was much sought after by the wiser of them, who knew the value of a line or two of praise in the important periodical which I represented on first nights. Rhona Meynell had always been a favourite of mine, mainly, so I persuaded myself, because of her enthusiasm and determination to get on in her profession, and her contempt for the bright butterflies which came fluttering round the wings and the stage-door whenever she was acting.

"My dear boy!" she cried as I entered, "I was only just reading about you in the *Whitefriars*

Gazette. But where 's that cousin of yours ? He 's never up to time."

" Surely, Rhona, you are not turning model ? "

" Not I. Claude 's painting my portrait as *Miss Hardcastle* in *She Stoops to Conquer*. If it gets into the Academy I shall make Ormond give me a rise of salary."

Rhona Meynell was then acting at the *Piccadilly* in that not notable cast of which Belle Beresford was the star.

" It 's a good thing for you and Claude the Academicians' wives are not on the Hanging Committee," said I.

" You 've had *your* portrait painted in pretty strong colours in the *Whitefriars Gazette*," said the actress, picking up a paper. " Shall I read it to you ? "

" Yes, do, please."

" Very well. Sit down there by the window. Where is it ? Let me see. Oh ! I 've got it— ' Scenes in the Old Bailey. The Great City Frauds. By our Special Reporter.

" ' The solemn-looking Judge took his seat on the Bench amid intense silence, and all eyes were turned upon the dock as the prisoner entered it. The number of ladies and members of the Corporation who were accommodated with seats in the Court was proof of the immense interest excited by this important case. But the audience was doomed to be disappointed. A pin could have been heard drop as Mr. Lucas Gilbert, Counsel for the Prosecution, rose and addressed the Judge. Mr. Gilbert is one



whom we rarely see in the Court or the precincts of the Old Bailey, his practice lying chiefly on the Civil side. He is a man of distinguished appearance, tall, dark, and handsome, with lustrous dark brown eyes. The features of his clean-shaven face are clear-cut and aristocratic, and yet, strange to say, there is also that expansive brow, and squareness of jaw, so characteristic of members of the legal profession——”

“For Heaven’s sake, stop!” I cried. “I can stand no more of that rubbish.”

“Bet you ten to one it was written by a lady!” cried Rhona. “You know you’re not altogether bad-looking, but a man would never notice it. Lady Kilmore was there.”

“What do they say about her?”

My fair friend again took up the paper. “Not much,” she said. “‘On the Bench, sitting by the Sheriffs, was the lovely daughter of Prince Rozan, chaperoned by Lady Kilmore. The two ladies were attired in——’”

“Thanks, I was there, and saw their frocks. There’s no doubt a woman wrote it. If a man was the culprit, he would have described Princess Corine’s face, left mine alone, and said nothing about the dresses. Corine is one of the most beautiful young women in London. Perhaps the most beautiful.”

“Corine being—?” And Rhona looked at me inquiringly.

“Prince Rozan’s daughter,” said I.

“Well, it seems that the most beautiful woman in

London was so alarmed by the speech of the gentleman with lustrous eyes, square jaw, and terrible legal features, that she fainted, and had to be carried out. By the way, Lady Kilmore wants me to go yachting with her this summer."

"I may be one of the party—for a short time. I'm trying to find a suitable yacht for her."

"Oh!" said Rhona, casting her eyes to the ground and tapping with her fingers on the arm of her chair.

I guessed what was in her mind, but waited for her to speak.

"Do you," she said presently,—and she spoke with much hesitation, a slight flush spreading over her fair face,—“Do you—have you ever met Sir Patrick's brother, the parson?”

"No. I have seen his photograph. He is n't a bad-looking chap."

"Is n't he a bit—you know—dotty?" And she pointed her finger at her forehead.

"He's very High Church."

"Lady Kilmore told me"—she bent forward as she spoke, and addressed me in a low, serious tone, as if she was confiding to me the details of some fearful crime about to be committed—"Lady Kilmore told me that her brother-in-law actually proposes to take a vow never to marry, and to shut himself up in a monastery with a lot of other celibate Johnnies!"

"He's been jilted," said I.

"Oh, then that accounts for it," said the young



actress, looking immensely relieved. "He'll get over *that*. They always do outside story-books."

"Don't you think we might confide in each other just a little more?" said I.

Rhona flushed a deep red this time.

"What do you mean?" said she.

"Why, that Lady Kilmore looks to you to assist in continuing the direct descent of the Kilmore line. If she and Sir Patrick and this parson brother of theirs die childless, the property goes to the O'Sullivan's of Galway."

"Lady Pat hinted at something of the kind. Is n't it a delightfully Irish idea?" said Rhona, laughing. "But I could never marry a High Church parson. Just think of me at early Matins, Mr. Gilbert, and doomed to penance if I ate a cutlet on Friday. No! If ever I marry, it will be an actor, and we'll run a theatre together."

"I don't think the idea was that you should marry him," said I.

"Good gracious! Mr. Gilbert!" cried the girl, jumping up and turning redder than ever. "What do you mean? What do you take me for?"

"I take you for the best-looking and best-natured actress on the stage," said I; "and one who will help Lady Pat in her very Irish, though very harmless little plot to pull her brother-in-law out of this deep hole into which he is endeavouring to plunge."

"I am afraid I don't quite understand you," said she, still a trifle indignant.

And then I explained Lady Pat's idea to her, at

least so far as I could make it out myself. The proposing anchorite, I told her, was to be thrown into the close society of some such charming lady as Miss Rhona Meynell. He was, in consequence, to see the folly of his ways, and decide that, after all, life in the outside world was worth living. "My only fear is," said I, "that he will fall deeply in love with you, and that you won't care a jot for him. If that happened, we should find him at the end of our cruise more determined than ever to immure himself within the Kensington Monastery."

"Well, I can only tell you, as I told Lady Kilmore," said Rhona, candidly, "that I won't have any hand in humbugging the poor chap. I will go for a cruise with you all, with pleasure, and treat him as I treat other men; but as for endeavouring to fascinate him, or play the lover, or the fool, or any other part, I have enough to do with that sort of thing on the stage. When I'm away on my holidays I want to enjoy myself, and not be bothered with anything of the kind."

Now, as Rhona was a very beautiful young woman, with charming manners, and as I knew full well she would be the life of the yacht, and, without any intention on her part, would fascinate the Rev. Maurice Kilmore, if he was capable of being fascinated by anything on this mortal earth, I had no hesitation in telling her that however she thought fit and right to behave, I felt quite sure Lady Pat would only be too delighted to have her on board.

"If that 's the case," said she, "and you are



going, I'll be there, but—ah! here's Claude, three-quarters of an hour late, as usual."

"I just want you to sign these papers, old man," said I to the artist.

Claude groaned over the labour involved in placing his name at the bottom of three different documents, and wanted me to put off the ceremony for a week until he had more time. But I managed to get the matter settled and left him with his charming sitter.



CHAPTER VI

MR. DAN COEY: COMPANY-PROMOTER

"It looks as if Dan Coey would lose his money," said a voice close to me.

I was sitting at the end of the Junior Counsels' seats in one of the Courts of Queen's Bench. Turning sharply I saw a short, dark man in a grey tweed suit standing at my elbow.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said, smiling somewhat apologetically; "but you don't seem to remember me. I was one of the detectives in King's case."

"But were you speaking to me when you mentioned Mr. Coey?"

"Yes, sir."

"What money is he going to lose?"

"Well, sir, I won't go so far as to say positively he's going to lose it, but he and some City friend of his, whose name he gave in, went bail for King for two thou' between them, and since the prisoner was discharged we have n't been able to set eyes on him. We rather suspected a bolt, and I had orders to watch him, but"—and he looked very blank—"to tell you the truth, sir, I don't know where he is. Hope you won't mention it, sir, but thought



perhaps you might have heard something about him, knowing Mr. Coey."

"I hardly know Mr. Coey at all," said I.

"Beg pardon, sir. Saw you drive off in a carriage with him; that 's what made me think you did. You 'll excuse me mentioning it, sir? If you should happen to hear anything of the prisoner, hope you won't mind giving me a hint. That 's my card, sir." And with many apologies for speaking to me, the baffled detective quietly slipped out of the Court.

So the Great Financier had become bail for King! What interest had he in the man, I wondered. But remembering that even the wealthiest men in the financial world are sometimes placed under obligations to the members of that class, who, in plain English, may be termed scamps, and that Mr. Dan Coey might be simply discharging such an obligation, the matter passed from my mind for the time being. I was none the less not a little annoyed to feel that there was a risk of King escaping. Not only was he a dangerous swindler whose practices it was most desirable to put a stop to in the public interest, but the case had been boomed in the papers, and to run this man in would be a noble plume in my forensic cap.

But this was to be a day of coincidences. Just at the rising of the Court, who should come up to me but the Great Financier himself? Intimating that he wished to hold converse, he begged me to go with him to the Cecil Club, headquarters of a great politi-

cal body, and believed, at that time, to be the most select and exclusive social club in London. That he should be a member of it surprised me.

It did not take us long to reach Pall Mall in Coey's well-appointed but somewhat showy brougham.

"You look a bit tired," said he, leading me to a snug corner in the smoking-room of the Cecil. "I'll stand some fizz. Here, waiter! bring a bottle of the same brand as the Prince drinks. Don't stand staring! You know, Pol Roger, 1884."

I vainly protested that I did not want champagne at that hour of the day. I was obliged to have it.

"Good fizz never did anyone harm at any hour of the day or night," said Coey. "My friend Rothschild never drinks anything else. I import hogsheads of this brand, and only yesterday Rozan asked me to get thirty dozen of it for the *Lorelei*."

I had not heard of the *Lorelei*.

"That's his yacht," explained Coey, "a big top-sail schooner. A real beauty; everything tip-top. By the way, you're a yachting man, ain't you?"

I told him I was.

"That's lucky," he continued; "I want a man or two to make up the party. Rozan has told me to invite who I like. You must come with us. We're going for a cruise to the North Cape."

"You are very good," said I, "but I am afraid I should not be back in time for this trial of King. It is a case I must do myself."

As I spoke I remembered my conversation with the detective. If King really had bolted the trial

could not come off, and I might as well go to the North Cape as elsewhere. I would go to the North Pole in the *Lorelei* if Corine was to be of the party. But was she? That was the question. True, I had half promised Lady Kilmore to sail with her, but I was not altogether enchanted with the prospect of playing second fiddle to the celibate Maurice. Not that Rhona had any charms for me, be it understood,—at least, none since that sweet face had flashed upon me from the Bench of the Old Bailey,—but, at the same time, I felt that the cruise with Lady Pat's party might not be a very lively one so far as I was concerned.

"You are very good," said I. "I will think it over. I suppose the Prince is going?"

"I expect so," said Coey. "He generally does."

"Is the Princess fond of yachting?"

I endeavoured to ask the question with an air of extreme disinterestedness.

"Oh, she's about as fond of it as most girls," said the Great Financier. "Two days in her cabin, you know, as sick as a dog; and then she gets all right."

I thought Coey the most disgustingly brutal, coarse man I had ever met.

"Who is going with you?" I asked bluntly.

"Oh, a few City friends of mine," said he. "Lord Tweedlemouth, Chairman of the New Chum Mine; and there's his brother-in-law, the Honourable Auberon Stenning, a man I'm putting on the Board of our new cycle company. A knowing fel-

low, Stenning. He would n't join us unless I guaranteed him five hundred a year in fees and a nice little present in shares. Gad! These fellows do know the value of their names."

"Or titles?" I suggested.

"Well, of course, it's the title as does it," said the Great Financier, confidentially. "If I can only get a lord or two, with a baronet and a half-pay general, on the front page (of the prospectus, I mean), why, bless you! the public come in like wasps into a grocer's shop. But the price is going up so confoundedly," he grumbled.

"The price of what?"

"You'll hardly believe it"—and he bent forward and spoke in a whisper—"but I paid away a cheque yesterday to a certain marquis, whose name I won't mention, for £20,000."

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed, taken aback; "what for?"

"Why, to give me his name and title and services. But, bless you, it's worth it. The capital of the company is a million and a half, and we shall raise every penny of it with him as Chairman."

"Does he know anything about the business?"

"Nothing at all," said Coey, candidly, "but I can't get the capital without him, or someone like him. Of course I have to put a safe man or two on the Board, to keep things straight, and always be at his elbow when wanted."

I begged for another glass of champagne. The audacity of this man overpowered me. "I should

think you find being a member of this club very useful," said I, after a pause.

He did not seem to notice the satire, or the intended satire, in my remark.

"Very," he said; "but there! you have no idea what a job I had to get into it. First, there was a big cheque to a member to put me up, and then I had to promise them six or seven thousand towards their political expenses. And after all they made me write 'em another big cheque. But, bless you! I mean to make it pay me well enough in the long run. Do you know anything about company law, Mr. Gilbert?"

I told him I had had a good deal to do with commercial cases.

"Well, I'll tell you what. I like you; you're a shrewd man of business," he said; and he patted me on the shoulder. "After we come back from this cruise, I'll make you Standing Counsel to one or two companies of mine. Each of 'em will bring you in a few hundreds a year, or more; and if you're in the City with me, I can generally manage a little deal for you from time to time, and put a few extra thousands into your pocket. We'll settle the whole thing when we're on board the *Lorelei*."

My income at the Bar, at that time, was about fifteen hundred a year, and I was aspiring—I confess the folly of it; but what does not a man do when he is in love?—to marry a lovely girl who, owing to her great beauty and father's wealth and

...age. The temptation was
with shame and contrition now
My good angel filled me with
man and his ways; still, my
moment was to accompany Pr
yachting cruise. With just a s
wisdom in me, I fear, I told Co
obliged to him for his proposal,
over. If I found myself able to
invitation, we could refer to the
on the North Sea. Coey did
me quite so black as he painted
may appear to those who read
pages. At that time the great
E. T. Hooley, and persons conne
not thrown a flood of light upo
methods of our nineteenth-century
ers, by their remarkable revelat
ruptcy Court. To be candid,
Coey's stories of huge cheques giv
peers for the use of their names
tunate investors. Doubtless the
consideration, for even then we
City noblemen guinea-nine



receiving them, would have been regarded as an utterer of the most disgraceful slanders.

I could not help feeling, however, that Coey's offer to me of these handsome salaries for being Standing Counsel in his companies, was after all in the nature of a bribe. This sharp City man was not one to give money away without expecting some return for it, and, moreover, a profit on the transaction. I, then, was to do something for him in return. What was it he wanted of me? I sat silent, sipping my champagne and pondering over this question, while the Great Financier rattled on concerning his enormous business transactions, wealthy friends, and generally deluged me with swagger.

"Then we may expect you at Southampton on the 1st of August?" said he.

"You forget," I answered, "that I am half bound to Lady Kilmore, who, as you know, is getting up a yachting party of her own. Were n't you going to ask someone about a yacht for her? I can't get to hear of anything suitable."

"I'll attend to that," said Coey, airily. "Oh, she'll let you off. I'll get the Princess to tell her that we can't do without you."

"Even if you do, I don't see how I can avoid returning for King's trial," said I, with some hesitation, for his mention of Corine had made me waver more than ever. Then, suddenly, my conversation with the detective flashed across my mind. "By the bye," I said, "do you know where King is? You went bail for him?"

Coey seemed somewhat taken aback by my remark.

"Went bail for him!—Oh, yes! I believe I did, now you mention it. I had forgotten it. Did n't like to see a poor chap shut up in prison, you know, all that time. Deuced hard on him, I thought."

"I hear he has disappeared. If so you 'll lose your money."

"Oh, no, he has n't," said Coey. "I know where he is. He 'll turn up all right. We 've got a code of honour in the City, you know, which you lawyers don't understand."

"Don't we? You forget I have had some experience of commercial cases. I suppose it will be all right if you know where King is," said I.

All right, indeed! At that moment I heartily wished King at the bottom of the sea, so that I could make this long voyage to the North with my beloved Princess. And here let me again confess that I see now, looking back, that I not only thought like a fool, but acted like one. But then, in excuse, be it remembered that I was absolutely and for the first time in my life really in love, and love makes fools of the wisest.

"If you must be back for the trial," said Coey, "I suppose you might n't be able to get up to the North Cape, but the *Lorelei*'s sure to put in at some of the Norwegian ports, and you could take steamer home, and be back in splendid time."

"Well, kindly leave it an open matter for a few days," said I. "I will write you a note



MR. DAN COEY: COMPANY-PROMOTER 59

on Wednesday. I must see Lady Kilmore before deciding."

"Very well. Good-bye, Mr. Gilbert!" And he shook hands with me effusively. "Very glad to know you. You are a man after my own kidney; and, as I said, I can do you a service if you like. But we'll settle all that when we're sailing together. Of course you'll come."

CHAPTER VII

PRINCE ROZAN

THANKS to Lady Pat, I received an invitation to Prince Rozan's. London was thinning at the time, and this was the last important social function of the season. But so great was the interest excited by the vast wealth, profuse display, and remarkable personality of the Prince, that I found the house in Park Lane densely crowded. In fact not a few people had returned to town on purpose to be there.

On the rare occasions when Prince Rozan threw open his house to London society, he entertained right royally. His was one of the few remaining old-fashioned London mansions which possessed a garden of a quarter of an acre or so, and for this night, at any rate, the whole of this garden was turned into a magnificent ballroom, roofed in, so far as the inside was concerned, with what looked like pale rose-coloured satin, in which sparkled innumerable little globes of fire. Beneath this rosy, star-spangled firmament was a perfect dancing-floor of waxed parquetry. The walls were almost entirely covered with mirrors, between which were clusters of lights festooned with flowers. Here and there were



shady alcoves—ferny bowers where scented fountains played, and the dim light given by lamps enclosed in ruby glass played on great blocks of ice which lay among the ferns and moss. One of the admirable Hungarian bands, I think it must have been, provided music for the dancers; but the performers with their gay blue uniforms were, for once, out of sight.

Before I reached the magnificent ballroom I had to pass up a wide flight of stairs, between a row of richly dressed Indian servants, and along with other constantly arriving guests make my bow to the Prince and his beautiful daughter.

It was one of the notable features of this remarkable man, that he never forgot a name or a face. Having greeted me, he reminded me that we had conversed for a few seconds at the Duchess of K——'s two years earlier, which was about the time when he first began to shine in London society. Royalties, foreign or otherwise, are sometimes disappointing so far as their personal appearance is concerned, but I certainly never saw more princely a prince than Rozan. As he stood there, at the head of the great flight of stairs, receiving the brilliant throng, he seemed to dominate everything and everyone. In appearance he owed nothing to his dress,—which was English, except that he wore the broad ribband of some foreign order. He stood, I should say, six feet two inches in height, and was as upright as a dart. His eyes were intensely piercing, black, and placed perhaps somewhat too closely

together. Over these were thick, arched, black eyebrows, while a strong crop of coarse black hair was brushed straight back from a broad and lofty forehead. He had the big high-bridged nose and massive, firm mouth and chin often found in born leaders of men. In complexion he was too dark for an Englishman, but yet not dark enough for an Indian. It was by no means a genial face, and I found myself wondering, as I talked with him, how the fair lily standing at his side could be the daughter of such a man. Her mother, at any rate, must have been a European; that was certain.

Corine bowed slightly when I presented myself to her father, but did not join in our conversation.

"I expect you will find Sir Patrick and Lady Kilmore in the ballroom," said the Prince. "They arrived a few minutes ago."

Guests were crowding up the staircase, so I took this as a sign of dismissal. But before I left the side of my sweet Princess I falteringly asked her to reserve at least one place on her dance programme for me. She said (with a pretty blush and a slight smile which threatened dimples) she doubted if she would have much opportunity of dancing that evening. To my delight the Prince, who I feared might have thought me presumptuous, broke in upon our conversation, and told her he expected her to be a great deal in the dancing-room, and that she must certainly give me a waltz or two.

"The fifth waltz and the one before supper?" I timorously suggested.



The Princess bowed her assent, and again blushed slightly. I passed on, and wandered for a while through a series of gorgeous rooms which were crowded with most of the best people in London. But so wrapped was I in the joys to come, and so full of thoughts of my beautiful Corine, that I heeded them but little.

"Hallo, Lucas!" said a voice, awakening me from pleasant reveries. "Are you looking for us? Norah's in the *Silent Music-Room*."

Norah was Lady Pat, and the speaker her husband, a handsome, fair-moustached, sunburnt, pleasant-looking fellow of about my own age.

"I did n't know where to go," I stammered out. "Where is the *Silent Music-Room*? What does it mean? How can music be silent?"

"It is n't the music, old man. Come along, and I'll show you."

He led me down a corridor lit with electric light, and lined with a magnificent collection of modern pictures. Turning sharply through a curtained opening in the wall, we found ourselves in a vast room, at the end of which was a slightly elevated stage, the wings of which were completely filled with palms and tree-ferns. The room was in darkness save the stage, at the back of which was written this legend:

This is the Silent Music-Room, where those who love Music may listen to Music, and Music only.

On the stage was a girl in Hungarian costume,

playing a violin; sometimes singing as she played. A weird, strange performance, highly finished in its technique, yet almost barbaric in composition. For some seconds we stood silently listening.

Pat stifled a yawn.

"Deadly slow, ain't it? Norah pretends she likes it. She's over the other side of the room. As soon as the toon's over I'll go across and fetch her."

The weird notes of the Hungarian girl's voice and instrument slowly died away, yet still she stood there, looking out plaintively into the darkness over her audience, as if awaiting, yet dreading, their judgment. But so enrapt had they been, that for some seconds not a sound was heard. Then I heard a woman's voice exclaim, and there seemed a sob in her words, "Oh! it's over!" And the applause broke out.

Pat fetched his wife. There were tears standing in her eyes, I noticed, when we had passed into the brilliant light of the picture gallery.

"Faith! I never heard such music since I left Ireland," said she. "It brought back to me the mountains, with the soft mist lying in the hollows, and the great moorlands, and the wild wind sweeping across the bog, and the cry of the curlew. But I don't think I could have stopped another minute, it made me so sad."

"Come and dance it off," said I.

Lady Kilmore was looking very beautiful that evening, her dress some soft, satiny material the



colour of a Maréchal Neil rose which suited her dark hair and complexion admirably. She filled her programme within five minutes of entering the ballroom.

"I 'm after putting ye down for four dances, Lucas," said she. "I hope ye won't mind. I 'll give ye one of them, and then I will have three left for anyone who comes later. The boys do pester me so to dance with them. I 'll give you this one. Sure, there 's the music beginning. I wonder where they have hidden the band?"

It used to be one of my greatest delights to waltz with Lady Kilmore, but this evening I acquitted myself badly. I fear I must have been a dull partner, for at every turn I cast my eyes towards the great doorway, which was crowded with men, hoping to see Corine descending the stairs into the ballroom.

"Will we sit down now among the ferns?" said Lady Pat when the music ceased and the rustle of skirts and soft sliding sound of the dancers had given way to a general hum of conversation. "How pretty the red light is on the fountains!"

I took her into one of the ferny alcoves.

"Well, have ye found me a yacht yet, Lucas?" she said when we were seated.

"No, I can't get one to please me; not one I think sufficiently comfortable for you." And then I told her of the invitation Coey had given me to join the Prince's party, and asked her if she would

let me off my engagement. I think she was a little annoyed with me.

"Ye 're just a silly moth, Lucas," said she, fanning herself vigorously. "Ye 'll only singe your wings, and what 's the good of it? No, I won't let ye off," she added very positively. "I won't ever speak to ye again if ye desert us this time. D'ye think I and Ben and Benista are going to sea alone with Pat, who does n't know the stem of a boat from its stern? And if I 'm not enough attraction for you, is n't there Rhona?"

"Rhona 's very well—" I began.

"—But Corine 's better? Is n't it the truth I 'm speaking?"

"The Princess is very charming," I admitted. "And, by Jove! here she is. You 'll excuse me running off. I am engaged to her for the next dance."

"Well, you 're not going to leave me here all alone, are you, Lucas?" cried Lady Pat, much aggrieved. "Take me across to the other side. There 's Lady Bakewell over there. I want to hear about her bazaar for lost dogs. And then I 'll dismiss you to your Princess."

Evidently Lady Pat was piqued. Women—and men, for the matter of that—are jealous sometimes even of their friends' friends. I have no doubt, too, that she was anything but pleased to find that I, for whom she had obtained this invitation to the dance, should be asked to join the party on Rozan's splendidly appointed yacht, while she and Pat, who had



known the Prince for at least a year, were left out in the cold. But I am ashamed to say that the displeasure of this charming and very dear friend of mine troubled me not one scrap after Corine had once entered the ballroom.





CHAPTER VIII

THE WARNING

A DOZEN or more men were round my sweet Princess, begging to have their names put down on her programme, but I could tell from their manner, as I walked towards the group by the doorway, that she was refusing most of them. Then I claimed her as mine for a few short, blissful minutes.

I dare not trust myself to describe on paper the delights of that waltz. One has to be a lover to understand such things. Before we have loved they are absolutely unimaginable. Later on, in old age, we half forget them, and laugh at the little we remember as youthful follies, unless indeed we are still celibates—staid elderly maids or sentimental old bachelors who sigh when they think of the days that were or might have been, and sometimes venture—as likely as not in an album—some such sentiment as “ ’T is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.”

It was a dreamy German waltz the hidden band was playing, and we swung in unison together, slowly round the big ballroom. Corine was silent, and seemed thoughtful. I was too enwrapped in the



pleasures of the moment to speak. We outstayed all the other dancers.

"Thank you!" she said at last, when the music gradually died away. "Really I never enjoyed a waltz so much before."

How my blood thrilled as I heard her say this, which, after all, was perhaps only a commonplace compliment to her father's guest. Could it be possible, I wondered, that she had, by that wondrous intuition peculiar to so many women, become aware of the great wave of affection which was overwhelming me, and was in danger of being carried away by it herself?

"I hear you are taking a cruise to the North Cape soon," said I.

"Yes, we leave on the 1st of August."

"Mr. Coey invited me to make one of the party."

She looked at me in surprise. "He invited you?" she said. "We expect to be many months away; did they not tell you?"

Then I explained to her Coey's suggestion that I could, if necessary, leave the yacht at a Norwegian port, and return home by steamer. We had no other conversation then, for a partner came and claimed her.

I suffered such absurd agonies of jealousy—I can see now how ridiculous they were—from seeing her in another man's arms, that I left the ballroom, and tried to interest myself in Prince Rozan's pictures. It was, indeed, a magnificent collection. Here were works by Watts, Millais, Fildes, Herko-

mer, Tadema—in fact, all the modern English masters were represented in this gallery. Collected together in smaller rooms were quaint, bizarre pictures done by the impressionist schools, and dreamy, but poetic and beautiful landscapes of the romanticists. I was trying to make out a curious night scene—a bridge over a ravine, so it seemed, with the lights twinkling in the windows of a mediæval town hanging on the mountainside—when I saw Prince Rozan himself approaching me.

“ You do not dance, Mr. Gilbert ? ” he said, questioningly.

“ I have danced,” said I; and he little knew the world of meaning there was in that simple statement. “ I was admiring your pictures.”

“ Come into my smoking-room. I have a curious collection of pipes of all kinds. I can lend you pipes smoked by the cannibals of the West coast of Africa, hubble-bubbles of Persia, the great hookahs of India, and Chinese opium pipes. I can even let you have an Afridi pipe if you please.”

“ I should like to see the collection beyond all things,” said I; “ but I trust you will not consider me unenterprising if I do not test the pipes, but show a preference for a Havana cigar.”

When it came to the point, and we were in the smoking-room, which was, so the Prince told me, an exact copy of one in the palace of the Sultan of Turkey, I remembered that I had to dance yet again with Princess Corine, so chose a fragrant cigarette.



"You are fond of the sea, I think?" said my host, looking at me keenly.

I told him that I was.

"I am glad to hear from Mr. Coey that you are likely to make one of our party."

"As to that," I said, in an aggrieved tone, "I am afraid there is no chance, as I am under a promise to chaperone Lady Kilmore and her pugs. You see her husband is n't much of a yachtsman."

Prince Rozan looked vexed. "That's a pity," he said. "You would have enjoyed a cruise with us. There is—I think I may say it without being accused of undue conceit—no yacht afloat like the *Lorelei*. Her speed is remarkable, she has every comfort, and the benefit of every invention modern science can provide. Come, now, you'll be able to make your excuses to Lady Kilmore?"

I could not help feeling flattered at the Prince's evident desire to have my company on the *Lorelei*. He had taken a fancy to me, I thought, and I felt, and no doubt looked, rueful when I had to tell him that this yachting trip of the Kilmores was being undertaken for a particular purpose connected with family affairs, and that I saw no possibility of being able to break my engagement.

The Prince became thoughtful. "I wonder if she would come with us," he said presently. "There's abundance of room."

I explained to him how Lady Pat's party was already made up, and of whom it would consist.

"Well," said he, "I know you all, except the

young clergyman. I'll see Sir Patrick, and ascertain if we can join forces. To be quite candid with you, Mr. Gilbert, I shall be glad of an excuse to put off some of the people Mr. Coey has invited. Our financial friend is all very well, you know, but—" And he shrugged his shoulders significantly. He pressed a button, and one of the Indian servants appeared almost immediately in the doorway. Prince Rozan spoke to him in some foreign language; the man silently withdrew, and a few minutes later ushered in Sir Patrick Kilmore.

"I hope I am not interfering with your dance programme," said the Prince, apologetically; "but we are making up a yachting party, Sir Patrick, and we thought you could perhaps help us."

Now, Pat was a man who did things as well as his income would allow him, and sometimes a little better, and had a great regard for men like Prince Rozan, who did things better still. To avoid the cost of hiring a yacht for the summer was also a consideration with any Irish landlord, particularly one who stood to lose all his civic earnings on *Fly-away*. It can therefore be easily understood that, when the Prince had explained the position and made the very generous offer to take the entire Kilmore party on board the *Lorelei*, my friend Pat expressed himself delighted to fall in with the suggestion, provided his wife was agreeable.

I of course had to tell the Prince that I might not be able to go quite so far as the North Cape, for it was absolutely necessary for me to return to London



by the second week in September to prosecute the man King for selling his bogus mine.

"Oh, there 'll be no difficulty about that," said Prince Rozan, who really appeared to be one of the most charming of men; "I will undertake that you shall be back in time for the trial, if you will give us the pleasure of your company so long as you conveniently can."

It was now nearing the hour when I was to enter Paradise for the second time that evening, so I hastened away to the ballroom. How the rest of the night passed I hardly remember. I was in an ecstatic condition which rendered me oblivious of mundane affairs. Corine's voice, a touch of Corine's hand, the movement of her supple waist as my arm clasped her in the waltz, the few words she let drop—pearls they seemed to me—from her rosy lips; all these I must leave undescribed. Those who are young, and have loved, will understand.

It was near daybreak when I walked through the cool morning air, up Piccadilly, to my chambers in Jermyn Street. Taking off my light summer overcoat, I noticed a perfume of flowers. There was a rose pinned in my buttonhole, which I had not before noticed. I could not explain its presence. How had it come there? Corine had not given it to me, of that I was certain. I unpinned it from my coat. A thin piece of cardboard was twisted several times round the stem of the flower. That was curious. Looking at it more closely, I perceived on the outside of the roll the one word, *Open*. A

piece of filmy yellow silk held the cardboard in its place. This I removed, and inside read :

“ DO NOT SAIL ON THE ‘LORELEI.’ ”

The words had been penned in Roman characters. The writing told nothing. There was no signature.

What did the message mean ? Who had sent it ? To these questions I could give no answer, though I lay awake for hours, anxiously wondering. Nor was any explanation of this strange warning forthcoming until long after, for there came a time when I understood.



CHAPTER IX

THE "LORELEI"

AFTER the friendliness displayed towards me by the Prince, I felt emboldened to call several times at the house in Park Lane. Twice I saw Corine, but never alone, and only for a few minutes. She was apparently pleased to see me, and I ventured to hope that I made some slight way in her good graces. Studying, as I did, every fleeting shade of expression on her beautiful face, it seemed to me that some great care was oppressing her, for I no longer saw the brilliantly happy face that I remembered so well when it first burst upon me in the Old Bailey. It was said that her father had been anxious for her to marry Lord M——n, who had more wealth than youth or good looks, and I had no doubt that this was troubling her. But as long as the venerable Earl did not come with us on the *Lorelei* I thought that possibly a certain young barrister (possibly a conceited puppy) might bring a look of gladness again into those sweet eyes.

I had a note, a humorous little note, from Lady Kilmore, telling me that Pat had set his heart on joining the Prince; and she was so certain *Fly-*

away would be nowhere in the race on Cup day at Goodwood (Pat it will be remembered had backed the horse heavily, and could ill afford to lose the money), that she had consented to his accepting the Prince's invitation. I was not to pay any more visits to yacht agencies on her behalf. "I am thinking," she wrote, "that after Maurice has had a month or two amid all the luxuries of Prince Rozan's floating hotel, that he will take no great pleasure in the celibate cells of the Kensington brotherhood. Rhona is to come with us all the same. I asked Corine to write to her." There was a little post-script. "If that wretch Coey is on board, perhaps Pat will find out what he really is. You must help me to draw him out a bit."

I had little work of importance towards the end of the Trinity Sittings, and by devilling out my remaining briefs—for barristers have their devils as well as printers—I was able to run down to Southampton on the 1st of August. The singular warning I had received on the night of the dance had almost passed from my mind. It was a meaningless, stupid affair, I thought; perhaps a practical joke on the part of someone. Indeed, I still half suspected Lady Pat, for she had shown very clearly that she resented the wavering of my allegiance to her. But a thousand anonymous warnings should not deter me from spending a happy month with Corine.

At Southampton the train takes passengers to a pier station, and looking through the carriage win-



dows, it did my heart good to see the rippling water sparkling in the sunlight. Hundreds of small craft were at anchor on the north side of the pier up the estuary of the Test, while below it to the southward were larger vessels—yachts, steamers, men-of-war, and small coasters. Flitting in and out between them were a few of those swallows of the Solent, irreverently called skimming-dishes, so shallow are they, though stable enough by reason of deep centre-boards or bulb-keels.

Most of my fellow-passengers were bound for the Isle of Wight, and went down to the steamer pontoon. My destination was the pier-head where the Prince had arranged to meet me. Though there were several yacht's dingies and launches waiting by the steps, I had no difficulty in deciding which of them belonged to the *Lorelei*. It was a long, white craft, manned by one of Rozan's Indian servants, and four foreign-looking sailors. The portion of the stern reserved for passengers was richly carpeted, while tiger-skins were thrown over the seats, the backs of which were quaintly carved and heavily gilded. There were neither oars, engine, nor other motive power visible, yet immediately I stepped on board, the boat began to move slowly ahead, turned, and, gathering speed, was soon gliding smoothly down Southampton water at the rate of ten or twelve miles an hour, its polished brass-work and gilding glistening in the sun. I was then quite unable to comprehend our strange means of progress. Electricity is now so commonly used for

these purposes, that the motive power of Rozan's gig would be evident to most people; but at that time the few electric launches in existence were seen only on the Thames, and but little understood.

The *Lorelei* was lying at anchor off Netley Hospital, and the first sight of her justified her owner's praises. Never did a more beautiful schooner sail our seas. Even as she rested there, like some sea-bird on the water, the graceful lines of her long, white hull, the perfect proportions, and great height of her tapering spars marked her as being a yacht in a thousand. She was flying a blue ensign, and the burgee of one of our principal yacht clubs. As I stepped on board, Prince Rozan himself greeted me with evident pleasure.

"Welcome, Mr. Gilbert," he said. "You are the first to arrive. Lady Kilmore wires me that she has missed her train. My steward will show you your cabin. You 'll find us all on deck under the awning."

Us, I hoped, included Corine, and did not include Lord M——n.

I found I had been allotted a small stateroom aft of the companion-ladder, on the starboard side; small,—that is, in comparison with some of the other cabins,—but more luxurious, and infinitely better appointed, than anything of the kind I had ever seen. It was indeed a Paradise for the feather-bed sailor. The ordinary bunk was dispensed with, and in its place was a brass cot, swung between supports at the head and foot; poised, indeed, on gimbals like



a compass and regulating itself to every motion of the vessel. As I first saw the cabin, there was none of the usual toilet furniture visible; but the Indian steward, who had entered with me, touched sundry buttons, and let fall from their places of concealment in the wall, washstand, mirror, and toilet table. Sliding away a long panel, he disclosed a bath, where I found, according to the legends on the silver taps, that I could, if I pleased, bathe in hot or cold water, either fresh or salt. There was electric light everywhere: at the head of the cot, over the mirror, and even in the bath alcove. The place was redolent of Eastern perfumes, but these I hardly appreciated, infinitely preferring the smell of the good salt sea. The ceiling was covered with delicate wood-carvings, such as are common enough in Indian cities, while between the panels of the walls were oil-paintings, mostly sea-scapes, and evidently the work of a master hand.

I made a hasty toilet, and hurried on deck. The after part of the vessel was covered with a striped awning, and carpeted with rugs and skins of wild animals. Corine was presiding at a dainty little tea-table, Prince Rozan and Coey lounging near her in deck-chairs.

"You take tea, I suppose," she said, with just a suspicion of a fleeting dimple.

"Or a brandy-and-soda?" suggested Coey.

I would have taken oil of vitriol had it been offered me by the hands of my beautiful Princess.

We sat there awhile talking of our coming voyage,

and criticising the yachts which, with all sails spread, and slightly heeling over in the faint westerly breezes, were reaching up and down Southampton water.

"It would be pleasant to have a few days at Cowes while the racing is on," said I to the Prince.

"Unfortunately, we are starting too late for the North Cape as it is," he answered. "I fear we shall come in for the fogs and the ice. The summer is of short duration in those latitudes. Ah! I think I hear the pinnace coming alongside. I hope Lady Kilmore has not missed another train."

A moment later, my Irish friend herself, carrying Benista, followed by Sir Patrick with Ben in his arms, came down the deck towards us.

"Will ye ever grant me pardon for giving ye so much trouble, Prince Rozan?" she cried. "Indeed 't was Pat's fault. He must needs call at some company's office in the City to see that all was right before we left London."

"Oh! *he* need n't have troubled," broke in Coey, drily, and with just the slightest emphasis, so it seemed to me, on the pronoun.

"And then," continued Lady Pat, taking no notice of the Great Financier, "when we got to the station poor Benista—'t was so good of you, Prince, to let me bring the darlin's!—somehow got lost. While we were looking for her the train steamed out of the station. And will ye believe me? we found the little dear, after all, in the office where they sell dog-tickets. Pat had forgotten to take one for her. Was n't it wonderful of her?"



But don't let us disturb ye all. Will ye give me a cup of tea, my dear?" And she turned to Corine.

Lady Kilmore was enraptured with the yacht, as well she might be; and when she had rested, insisted on being taken over every part of it, the Prince being good enough to act as showman to the Kilmores and me. The principal saloon, through which he first took us, was not unlike the Eastern smoking-room in the Park Lane house, all the woodwork being minutely carved, the floor covered with Persian rugs, while round the sides were low divans on which were scattered luxurious silk cushions. Passing through this, we came into a smaller saloon which was to be devoted, so Prince Rozan told us, to the ladies. Here was an entire change of decoration, the seats and backs being covered in pale blue satin, and the ceiling and walls painted with rosy-limbed cupids engaged in a battle of flowers amid fleecy clouds.

But it was the arrangements on deck which amazed and delighted me most. The schooner had an unusual number of boats, all of them fitted with small propellers worked, so the Prince said, by electricity. Few of such operations as lowering boats, making sail, and so forth, appeared to require any labour on the part of the crew. Going up to the davits of the largest boat, Prince Rozan touched a lever, and the great pinnacle descended into the water as if lowered by unseen hands. Another lever moved, the ropes began to play through holes in the deck, and the boat slowly regained its position. I im-

agined at first that the work was carried out by the crew stationed below the deck; but this was not so; for I was afterwards shown the clever machinery which controlled the davits. Prince Rozan assured us that sail was made in a similar manner. Both the large mainsail and foresail halyards could, so he said, be set in motion by levers placed, some close to the man at the helm, others near the mast amidships. This seemed to me almost impossible. Perhaps reading doubt in my face, he called one of the crew.

"Strip off the sail-cover," he said. "Now I will show you something which I fancy would astonish most yachtsmen."

He touched the lever, the halyard strained tight and began to move, there was a slight creaking heard in the blocks, and within half a minute the great foresail was set, and set well. It took even less time to lower it.

Lying on the deck about amidships, lashed to the port bulwarks, was what appeared to be a long, narrow boat, entirely concealed from view by a covering of painted canvas.

"Still another boat?" said I to the Prince, as we passed it after the foresail had been lowered.

"Oh, she does n't belong to the yacht," said he; "I merely have charge of her for a friend. It's a little launch of great speed."

Before dinner, Rhona and the Rev. Maurice Kilmore arrived together.

"Such a lark!" said she to me, later on in the



evening, as we leaned over the side of the yacht, watching the medusæ drifting toward the Solent with the ebbing tide. "The parson and I travelled down all the way together, in the same carriage, without knowing each other. He kept glaring at me, and I at him. It was not until we got to the pier, and in the same boat, that we found out we were to voyage together. The poor man seemed quite confused. He's got a nice profile, has n't he?"

I am afraid I did not show any particular interest in the Rev. Maurice Kilmore's profile, for I wanted to be with Corine, and Rhona had carried me off to show her the yacht, very much against my will. Rhona was a pleasant enough companion, but I had dreamed all the way down in the stuffy train that day, of sitting under the stars in the cool night air with Corine by my side, perhaps even venturing soft nothings, if I found her in romantic mood.

The ladies left us early in the evening. Feeling indescribably bored by Coey, who monopolised the whole of the conversation, giving us more or less correct details of his vast financial schemes, I, too, soon retired to my luxurious stateroom. I sat for a while alone there, pondering discontentedly over the events of the day. When, at last, attired in pajamas, I turned back the coverlet to lay myself in that wonderful swinging cot, I saw on the pillow an envelope addressed to me. My name appeared in Roman letters, as had been the writing of that singular warning I received on the night of the dance. I

broke open the envelope hastily. Inside were the following brief sentences:

"BE WARNED BY A FRIEND. LEAVE THIS YACHT. MAKE AN EXCUSE TO GO ON SHORE BEFORE SHE SAILS, AND DO NOT RETURN."

I must confess that I felt supremely uncomfortable after reading this second message. It was possible, I thought, that Lady Pat was continuing some silly practical joke which she had commenced at Prince Rozan's house. The message could not be from the Prince himself, nor from Coey, for both had urged me to join them on this cruise. The Princess was of course out of the question, as were Maurice Kilmore and Rhona. Either there was some danger threatening me, and I had a secret friend on board, or else Lady Kilmore was the culprit. Before I slept I finally decided to lay the letter before Pat and his wife, as soon as I rose in the morning. It was a matter in which I felt I needed friendly counsel and advice.

At length, worn out with thinking, I fell asleep, and have an indistinct recollection of being half awakened in the night by a gentle whirring sound, and the splash of water. When I fully came to myself in the morning, it was broad daylight. The first thing I noticed was that the ceiling of the cabin seemed slightly out of the horizontal. This was very strange, but I at first attributed it to a temporary list owing to the boats having perhaps been



lowered from the davits on one side of the yacht only. They were heavy things by reason of the accumulators they carried.

As my waking senses came to me clearer and clearer, I heard the splash of water.

I leaped from the cot and looked out. We were apparently on the open sea, moving slowly through the green water which ever and anon surged up above the port-hole.

CHAPTER I

A STRANGE CRA

I WAS not a little vexed to find that the ship had left her moorings so much earlier than I expected, for I had arranged to have my letters sent down to Southampton. I was so courteous of our host, to spirit me away in an almost mysterious fashion.

"Perhaps, after all," I thought, "the ship, through a small port-hole being lighted, was mistaken, and we are still lying in the water, the land obscured by the morning mist."

I began to dress hurriedly, and when I came upon the warning letter I had forgotten on the previous night. I took it up and read it again and again, but was none the less soon as I had a few clothes on, I felt that the sun must have risen quite two hours earlier than was only just appearing, an almost black cloud above a great bank of leaden-coloured mist. To the north



vas was set, and the yacht, heeling gently over with the weight of her heavy booms, was running before the wind. I went up to the binnacle. Our course was E.N.E., and a glance at the dial of the patent log showed me that we had already run nearly seventy miles, and this though the wind was so slight that it hardly rippled the leaden-coloured water, on which, as it rose and fell, was a blood-red glint from the mist-born sun.

Was I asleep and dreaming, or on some phantom, crewless ship which supernaturally steered itself? Was some invisible mariner standing at the tiller, which, ever and anon, seemed to be slightly pulled over to port, as if in human hands, keeping the vessel true on its course? The only sounds to be heard were the slight creaking of the blocks and a strange whirring. I am no coward, but the whole thing was so eerie that I felt apprehensive. How it we had already travelled so far in so light a breeze? We were even then sailing unnaturally fast. I determined to go below and arouse Sir Patrick. On the companion-ladder I met Rhona. A small relief to find myself face to face with a creature.

"I have been awake for an hour or more," said Rhona, "and I made up such a splendid riddle about the ship that I felt I must come on deck to find out if it was true. I don't want to ask it. What! are n't you feeling well?" (Rhona could not have looked quite myself.) "I thought you were a good sailor. I suppose you sat up half the night."

By this time she had reached the deck.

"Why, where are we?" she exclaimed.

"Somewhere off Beachy Head," I said grimly.

"But when did we start?"

"I have n't the slightest idea."

"Oh! how beautiful she is," cried the girl, looking aloft at the swelling white canvas; "and does n't she cut through the water!"

"Yes," said I; "we have cut through nearly seventy miles of it since I saw you last."

"What's the matter with you?" she said, pursing up her pretty lips. "Why, surely you of all persons ain't feeling that way! Had n't you better have a cup of tea? I had one before I came up. I rang the electric bell, and a great Indian with a turban came running into my room, salaaming, and half frightening me out of my wits."

"Oh, I'm all right," said I.

"Well, then, shall I ask you my riddle? It's about Mr. Maurice."

"I have a more difficult conundrum to solve than ever you can invent," said I.

"I never saw anything like it!" cried Rhona, pettishly. "You lawyers have n't the least sense of humour, with your *Have his corpses* and *fi-fa's*, which I suppose is the Italian for 'shocking.'" (Rhona's knowledge of the law was limited to the information on the subject contained in the *Pickwick Papers*.) "Sh!" she said, drawing me behind one of the boats. "Here's Brother Maurice himself. He'll faint if he sees me on an empty stomach."



The Rev. Maurice Kilmore had slowly ascended the companion-ladder, and was standing on the deck, gazing out at the rising sun. Presently he clasped his hands, let his head fall on his breast, and we saw his lips move as if in silent prayer. This done, he crossed himself reverently.

"How awfully pi' he is," said the girl. "I wonder if he does it because he really has a call that way, or to drive the little widow out of his mind."

"Perhaps both," I suggested. "Eight parts widow, two parts vocation."

While we were speaking, the whole demeanour of the young clergyman completely changed. First he cocked his eye alertly aloft, and then looked aft. Doubtless missing the helmsman, he uttered an ejaculation, ran towards the tiller, laid hold of it, and commenced steering the yacht. But almost immediately a gaunt figure wearing a turban jumped up through some hatchway near the forecastle, ran down the deck towards him, and began vigorously talking in Hindoostanee or some Indian dialect. Words failing, he tried signs, pointing to the tiller, the sails, over the side, and then along the length of the yacht, evidently endeavouring to make the young clergyman understand something which, however, remained incomprehensible. We stood silently watching the scene, wondering what would happen next, when Prince Rozan strode hastily by us.

"In fair weather we do the steering from the bows of the vessel. The stern tiller can be left to take care of itself," he explained.

"Oh! I beg your pardon," said Maurice. "When I came on deck I saw no one here. I was afraid she would jibe."

Rhona and I came forward.

"We little expected to be so far from land at this early hour in the morning, Prince Rozan," I said, rather stiffly.

"No? I thought it would be an agreeable surprise for you," he answered courteously. "Before I retired to my cabin, my chief officer came to me and pointed out that the tide and wind were both favourable for running up the Solent. As all the machinery on board works so noiselessly that I felt sure none of you would be disturbed, I gave orders for the moorings to be slipped soon after midnight. We have done pretty well"—he looked at the dial of the log—"seventy miles in five hours."

His manner was so agreeable and convincing, that all my fears and suspicions vanished.

"It's a wonderful run, indeed," said I, "considering the wind. But then, this wonderful yacht of yours apparently sails without wind."

"To be strictly accurate," said the Prince, smiling, "we do not sail without wind, but we can progress without it. Come forward with me, and I will show you more of the *Lorelei's* mysteries."

"I like everything about your yacht, Prince, except the name, if you will forgive me saying so," said the Rev. Maurice Kilmore as we walked up the deck.

"Why, what's the matter with the name?" said



Rhona. "It could hardly be prettier. It simply ripples off the tongue."

"The *Lorelei* was a Rhine nymph who lured men to their destruction," said the young clergyman, gravely.

"Oh!" said Rhona, nudging me, and giving me an intensely whimsical meaning look.

Lifting up a hatchway, the Prince led us down a winding stair into the hold of the vessel. In a chamber dimly lit by electric light, we saw a small engine working noiselessly.

"That," said Prince Rozan, "is the newest type of oil engine, and though so small, it has immense power. We only use it to generate electricity. Now follow me"; and he took us along a gangway so narrow that we had to walk sideways. "Beneath you," he said, as we went along, "is my ballast—neither iron nor lead, but tanks full of oil to supply the engine. Near them are the accumulators where the electricity is stored. When we were in port we fully charged these. I expect that the oil engine has only just been started to replace the electricity we have used since we sailed this morning."

"Then you have auxiliary power?" said I.

"Yes; a small propeller worked by a motor which will drive her four or five knots an hour. Very useful if you want to get out of the way of an iceberg on a calm day."

"But we are not going to dodge icebergs, are we?" cried Rhona. "That's hardly yachting, you know."

"I trust not," said the Prince, gravely. "But it is well to be prepared for eventualities. Now come on deck again, and I will show you the steering apparatus."

Right in the bows was a small round hatchway. The Prince removed the lid of this little steering pot, and disclosed a swart, curly-headed figure with earrings, seated before a binnacle, with his hand on a brass lever. There were port-holes through which he could keep a lookout on both sides of the bows.

"I regard this arrangement," said the Prince, "as being very superior to the more common one of having a man at the stern, from whom passing vessels, and other dangers, are often hidden by the sails, masts, and rigging, and who has to depend to a large extent on the lookout for his guidance. Another pair of eyes watches for changes of wind, and the set of the sails, and signals any necessary directions to our good Gueta here. But with this reflector, Gueta can himself see how the staysails are drawing. Now would you not all like some breakfast? Let us go below into the saloon."

"I will go and call my sister," said Maurice, preceding us down the companion-ladder.

"Oh, do wait a minute, Prince," cried Rhona. "I must tell it to somebody. I've had it on my mind for the last hour and a half; and Mr. Gilbert seems so awfully slow this morning, there is no fun in him at all."

"I'm afraid I am not a man of humour myself," said the Prince, smiling at her; "but it does n't do

to take life too seriously. Pray let me hear it. A *bon-mot* of some kind, I presume ? ”

“ Yes,” said Rhona, “ it ’s a riddle. This is the question: Why is the safety of a yacht in a roadstead increased by having Brother Maurice on board ? ”

“ I flatly decline to guess riddles before breakfast,” said I.

“ Because it has its anchorite,” she declared triumphantly.

“ Anchorite ? ” queried the Prince, who was evidently puzzled.

“ Anchor right—anchor all right. Don’t you see ? ”

But the Prince was not acquainted with the word “ anchorite,” and I left her still explaining.



CHAPTER XI

OVER SUMMER SEAS

CORINE falsified the Great Financier's unpleasant insinuations concerning her, by appearing at breakfast with the colour of a rose on her lovely cheeks. It was a joy to me even to drink tea poured out by her fair, slim, delicate hands; and I fear my admiration of her must have been evident to most of those seated round the table. Once, looking up suddenly, I found her gazing at me with a half-sad, half-inquiring expression which set my heart-strings tingling.

The only two members of our party not present at breakfast were Ben and Benista, who, so Lady Pat informed us, "being unused to the sea, poor darlin's!" were suffering terribly in a basket in her stateroom.

"What do you think would do them good, Prince?" she asked. "I tried to get Benista to swallow a little *sal volatile*, but the dear thing pushed the glass away with her paw as soon as she smelt it; and I had n't the heart to let Pat pour it down her throat, as he wanted. Ye'll excuse me, I'm sure; I'll just take a look at the darlin's."



The kind-hearted woman bustled off into her cabin, returning, after the lapse of a minute or two, with the intelligence, given us in a whisper, that the said "darlin's" were asleep, which the Prince gravely assured her was the best thing for them.

For the rest, Rhona Meynell kept us amused with her quaint and irreverent views of things, while some of us—at least, the Kilmore brothers and myself—were not a little entertained by Coey's appearance as a yachtsman, and his swagger. He had shaved off his whiskers, and his fat face seemed all the rounder by reason of the infinitesimal moustache, waxed and curled at the ends. He was now dressed in a flannel suit of broad blue and lavender-coloured stripes, with large gold buttons. He had entered the saloon wearing a yachting cap, distinguished by a gold band, and his monogram in gold on the peak. When he walked the deck, and peered, or tried to peer, through one of the Prince's telescopes, he closely resembled the yachtsman of the music-hall stage.

Though our sudden flight from Southampton, and the mysterious movements of the yacht, had been satisfactorily explained, I by no means forgot the strange communication which had been placed in my cot the previous night. I had, as I have said, at first decided to take Lady Kilmore into my confidence, in a measure to ascertain if she was the perpetrator of a practical joke. But feeling that there might be more in the matter than a silly attempt to frighten me, and having regard to the fact that we

were far from land, with no likelihood of leaving the yacht for some days, however much we might wish to, and that Lady Pat was impressionable, and might be much alarmed, I changed my mind, and said nothing to her on the subject. Dear old Pat, her husband, who had no brains to speak of, was the last person in the world to consult in a matter of this kind. But being anxious that someone should share with me the burden of this unpleasant little secret, I finally made up my mind to impart it to Rhona's anchorite. I had an opportunity of speaking to him about midday. Kilmore and his wife were below, attending the doggies, while Rhona and Corine were exchanging girlish confidences in their pretty blue satin saloon. The Prince and Coey had been invisible since breakfast.

The Rev. Maurice Kilmore was sunning himself in a deck-chair, dozing abstractedly over a book of devotion. As I have so far barely noticed him, let it be said here that, like his brother, he was a fine, upstanding fellow, with the dark, thoughtful, slightly sunken eyes which are so often the leading feature in the faces of deeply religious people. His profile, even from a man's point of view, certainly merited the admiration Rhona had displayed in respect of it. His dark close-cut hair was commencing to grey. His clerical garb had this morning disappeared, and been replaced by the well-known dark-blue blazer, and other flannels, of the First Trinity Boat Club of Cambridge.

"This is very peaceful and beautiful," he said,



looking up. "I think the wind has freshened. Due west, is it not?"

"Yes," I said, seating myself by him. "I shall be glad of ten minutes' quiet conversation with you."

"By all means," said he, cheerily, drawing up his chair close to mine.

I showed him the two warning letters I had received respecting the cruise of the *Lorelei*, and explained how they had reached me—on the stem of a rose, and in my cot.

"It seems probable," said I, "that both were sent by the same person; and that person must be someone who was at Prince Rozan's on the night of the dance, and also on the *Lorelei*—at least, up to eleven o'clock last night."

"Who is there, in this wide world?" he asked, "who could possibly wish to keep you from making this voyage?"

"No one that I know of. Surely, Lady Kilmore could not——"

"I am certain it was not she," said he, "for only yesterday she was telling me how thankful she was to have you on board. She looks upon you as a sort of Captain Cook, Columbus, or some other ancient mariner who can control the waves, work the vessel out of any plight, and generally make things comfortable for her. And certainly it was not my brother," he continued. "He is the last man in the world to deal in anonymous letters. If he did n't want you here, he 'd say so plainly

enough. I need hardly say that I have had nothing to do with it."

"Of our party there only remains Rhona Meynell, and she was not at the ball."

"Then it must be one of the Prince's people," said Maurice. "Who is Prince Rozan?"

"Why, I thought everyone had heard of the Prince," I said.

"Yes, everyone has heard of him. But where does he come from? What country is he a Prince of? What is his nationality? How did he make his money?"

"Lucas!—Maurice!—Come here," cried a voice from the companion-ladder. "I'm so afraid the darlin's will roll overboard. I'd carry them meself, but the doctor told me, before we left London, that they must have exercise every day if they were to be kept in health. Would ye mind getting two bits of string, Maurice? And you can lead Ben, and perhaps Lucas will take Benista, up and down the deck for a little trot. I'd do it meself, but I don't seem to have me sea legs yet."

"Ask her about the Prince," I whispered to Maurice. "She knows more of him than I do."

"I will," he whispered. "Come and sit down awhile, Norah, dear. You'll make the dogs ill again if you exercise them to-day, with this lop on."

He rose, gave her his chair, and lay down on the deck beside her.

"We were just talking about our host," he con-

tinued. "Have you any knowledge of him beyond what all of us have—I mean, beyond what all of us know?"

"Not very much," said Lady Kilmore. "Someone said he was an Italian Prince, so I asked the Italian ambassador to find out for me. He told me that Rozan had been made a Prince by his Government, but he did n't think he was an Italian."

"Um! An Italian Prince!—probably bought his title," said Maurice, musingly. "Judging from his face, and all those Indian servants, I should say he came from the East, which may account for his speaking English so fluently."

"Sure, what does it matter where he comes from, Maurice!" said Lady Pat. "He's been kindness itself to Ben and Benista, and Pat declares he was never really comfortable on a yacht before."

"That's more than I am," said I, unthinkingly.

"You must be hard to please," said Lady Kilmore. "Don't ye sleep warm enough?"

"The fact is," said Maurice, I suppose to cover my rash remark, "he's never been made so comfortable before. He's not used to it."

"Sure, ye'll get over the unpleasantness of being too comfortable in a day or two," said Lady Pat.

"I hope so," said I, laughing; and then was sent to find a piece of string to enable Ben and Benista to take their exercise without being flung into Neptune's arms.

For some days nothing transpired of any particular interest. We made a wonderful passage north-

ward. There was hardly any breeze, but always a slight swell, perhaps a message coming down from the stormy seas within the Arctic Circle. Now and again we sighted an ocean tramp, or a square-rigged timber vessel which we soon left far astern of us, hull down on the horizon. There were few signs of life around us; occasional diving-birds, a few delicately marked, transparent jelly-fish floating by—that was all.

Perhaps in the first glow of my love—for Corine was kinder now that she knew me better—all things seemed to have an added beauty. Never before had I seen such ever-changing, greyish-violet hues on the water; never had the sun set so gorgeously, the great ball of fire dropping slowly into the distant mists, leaving a glorious afterglow. Very solemn and very beautiful was the wide expanse of water.

One evening Princess Corine and I left the rest, and seated ourselves on the very stem of the vessel, overhanging the water. In the foam playing around the bows the blue fires of the sea were glittering. Over us towered the white canvas, looking ghostly in the twilight. All around was stillness and solitude. For some time we sat there silently; she gazing at the water; I watching her.

“If only our lives could be as peaceful and tranquil as they are to-night!” she said musingly.

“If only they could!” I echoed. “Would you care to give up your father’s palaces, servants, riches, great gatherings of people, dances, operas,



jewels—all these things, to pass some such tranquil life as this ? ”

“ Oh ! gladly, very gladly ! ” she answered, with a sigh ; and how my heart leapt when I heard her say so.

There was a question on my lips, but I dared not let it pass them. I must first feel sure that I was loved.

“ We may have many such peaceful evenings yet,” I said. “ Another day, and we shall reach the Norwegian coast, and then we shall be in sheltered waters.”

“ When we reach Norway you leave us ? ” she said quickly.

“ Alas ! yes,” I said.

“ Bergen will be the best place,” she continued. “ You can always get a steamer back from there.”

“ You are very good,” I said, feeling not a little hurt ; “ but I hope to be able to spend quite a fortnight longer with you ; and perhaps I may go as far as Trondhjem.”

I could not help wondering if she wished me gone ; for though she was friendly enough, I had an uncomfortable feeling that the stalwart young parson, with his confounded profile, was finding no little favour in her eyes. Rhona had, indeed, called my attention to it, saying to me significantly and with just a tinge of bitterness,—“ There was no need for Lady Pat to have troubled about bringing me to fascinate her monkish brother. The little widow will soon be forgotten. Do you know, I

was on deck early this morning, when Brother Maurice made his first appearance, and he neither said prayer, nor crossed himself. He 's getting worldly."

The Princess's very next words added fuel to these jealous fires of mine.

"I should not be surprised," she said, "if you have to escort Miss Meynell back with you. She rather dreads the cold we may encounter at the North Cape. I have been telling her about it. It 's not my first voyage there, you know."

"Rhona does n't mind the cold," I said.

"But it might affect her chest or throat, and you know how much depends on her voice."

So she wished Rhona gone too! Rhona, then, she regarded as a rival. I quickly turned our conversation into other channels, and wondered at her lingering so long with me there, away from the handsome young clergyman.

"Would you not like to go below?" I said presently.

"Why?"—she turned her head and looked me straight in the face. "Are you tired of being here with me?"

There was the faintest possible stress on the "you," which set the barometer of my hopes and fears rising quickly.

"Tired!" And I laughed. "No, I would stop here for an eternity with you for a companion."

I could hardly see her face, but I think the blood mantled her cheek. We sat there, indeed,

until Lady Kilmore and Benista came in search of us.

"Sure, the Prince was afraid you had run off with his daughter, Lucas; so he sent me and a bloodhound to track you out."

Corine had not noticed the pug. "Bloodhound!" she cried, in a frightened voice, and laid her hand on mine. "Oh, how silly I am!" and she laughed. "What was I thinking about?"



CHAPTER XII

IN VINO VERITAS

WE had been five days at sea, and neared the Lofoten Islands. Thanks to light, favouring southern breezes, and the never-ceasing little propeller, we had covered about three hundred miles in each twenty-four hours. It was not until we were in 64° N. lat. that we approached the Norwegian coast, the snow-capped mountains of which, some thirty miles distant, showed out grandly on the starboard hand. We had so far made such a favourable voyage, that there seemed no reason why I should not travel to the North Cape with the rest of the party; and the Prince was good enough to say that he would defer visiting any of the Norwegian fjords until the return journey, which would enable me to see the Midnight Sun, and also to get a steamer back from Trondhjem.

"Leave yourself in my hands, Mr. Gilbert," said he, "and rely upon it, you will be back in ample time for this trial. I assure you, I feel quite an interest in the case."

Early on the morning of August 6th, we sailed almost in the shadow of the long mountain ranges



of the Lofoten Isles, amidst a maze of rocky islets. The Prince took the *Lorelei* into a splendid natural harbour, where we lay in deep water close to the foot of a great mountain on which were patches of snow. The shore was but a stone's throw distant. The sun shone brightly on the scanty vegetation and caused a daily melting of the snow-fields from which thousands of little milky torrents came dashing and roaring down the mountainside. Along the rocky shores were the wooden huts of the cod-fishermen; on a promontory, a few larger houses used as stores. One of these supplied us with many barrels of oil, as our fuel was running low. Here, to amuse us, the Prince arranged a fishing expedition. Going out in the largest pinnace, a mile or two from the coast, we anchored, lowered our lines, and made a mighty haul of cod, and one or two kinds of fish which are never seen in English waters.

"Is n't it a beautiful sight?" whispered Lady Pat to me,—she and I were sitting in the stern, apart from the rest,—“to see Maurice between them two girls? Sure, it's little he can be thinking of his celibate's cell now.”

"He'll never take vows of celibacy," I said, perhaps a little scornfully, for the sight of the Rev. Maurice Kilmore sitting next my Princess, and every now and again assisting her to haul up a big cod, did not appear to me a beautiful one, whatever might be Lady Pat's views on the subject.

Rhona was wild with excitement.

"Oh, such a tug! He's hooked! I'm sure

he 'll break the line, Mr. Kilmore. How he pulls! There, look out; I 've got him!" And in would come a great cod, red bream, or bluefish. "Oh, please be quick, Mr. Kilmore! Bait my hook first. No! A bigger bait than that, please! I really must catch a bigger cod than Corine."

The only gleam of satisfaction I had was that her anchorite certainly did favour her with the biggest bait, though for the most part he divided his attention fairly evenly between these two charming fisher girls. I had to dance attendance on Lady Pat, and was, I fear, a little absent-minded, and neglectful of my duties. But, none the less, it was her line which took the biggest cod of the day—a monster of nearly thirty pounds.

The fishing here in the early spring, when the cod come in to spawn, from the depths of the Atlantic, must be something astounding. So thick are the shoals that the Norwegians, as they lower their lines, can feel the descending leads hitting against the fish.

"Faith! There 's something better than petroleum coming on board," cried Lady Pat, soon after our return, as we stood by the bulwarks and watched the unloading of the pinnace on her last journey from the shore. "Did ye ever see such a noble box of lobsters as that? Ye ought to keep a little diary, Lucas; and be sure and put into it that the Norwegian lobsters are black. I wonder if they are good eating."

I ventured to suggest that all lobsters were black



before being boiled ; but Lady Pat, on the authority of a certain submarine picture in the Royal Academy, insisted that red was their colour in British waters.

But we did not tarry long in this lovely spot. Daylight was required to work the yacht out of these tortuous channels, where the tidal currents ran fiercely, and the mountains shielded us from the wind and gave dangerous deceptive calms. The summer days are long in those latitudes, but before we were clear of the islands there was a rosy glow on the snow-fields which partly covered the great mountains rising on both sides of us. Entering the Andsfjord, we began to feel the wind, which had changed. To the northward the sky looked dark and gloomy, while the lower clouds, with angry, ragged edges, were scudding rapidly across it. As we left the island of Andø astern of us, and sailed out into the Arctic Ocean, the Ice King sent a chilly blast down from the frozen seas ahead of us.

There are two courses open to mariners when bad weather is pending: To run for the open sea, or seek the shelter of a harbour. Prince Rozan chose the former alternative, though we were not many miles from Tromsø. Soon we were heading N.W. by W., and leaving the beautiful coast of Norway astern of us. Whether to husband our electricity, or because there was no longer need of auxiliary power, I cannot say, but the propeller was no longer used. Out we went, dashing through the rolling seas into the Arctic Ocean, with our decks awash. For the first time on the voyage the shivering Indian

servants forewent their turbans, and appeared in sou'westers and oilskin clothing. Very soon we had to lie to, the electric machinery was set in motion, and the sails lowered and reefed. Then up went the electric tiller, the head of the *Lorelei* paid off, and once more we were bounding over the waves, with the spindrift flying over us.

This grand north wind was bracing and exhilarating, a pleasant change after the almost monotonous calm of our voyage over summery seas. For the first time the Prince steered the yacht himself, from the stern tiller. The rest of us, clothed some in oilskins, some in mackintoshes, were huddled up under the weather bulwarks near him. But the wind steadily increased, and a drifting sleet rendered the deck so unpleasant that all, except the Prince and I, were driven below.

About eight o'clock the Prince brought the yacht up to windward, and lowered over the bows an immense floating anchor fitted with oil-bags. The apparatus connected with the halyards was set in motion, and very quickly every sail was packed snugly away. We made a little sternway, of course, but except that the vessel pitched slightly in the swell, she rode easily enough, the film of oil which spread over the water all round her maintaining an unbroken surface.

Trying though the afternoon had been, the three ladies were none the worse for it, and even Coey, who on the voyage north had looked green at times, had by this time overcome all unpleasant



tendencies of the kind. We had the usual luxurious repast in the evening. The Princess at all our meals was seated at the end of the table, facing her father. How it came about I do not know, but after the first day Maurice usurped Pat's place on one side of her, while I faced him. Next to him was the actress. Probably Lady Pat was at the bottom of this arrangement, for she cared little whether her brother-in-law was fascinated with Corine or Rhona, so long as he acquired such a taste for the good things of this life as would impart a tinge of bitterness to the supposititious sweets of seclusion.

The Prince sat silent and absorbed. This strange man had, indeed, been a puzzle to me throughout the voyage, apparently caring next to nothing for our society, yet always courteous, and almost deferential. Unless his presence was required on deck, we saw little of him, except at meal times, he and Coey shutting themselves up in a cabin where, so Corine told me, her father had a small chemical laboratory and workshop, devoting much of his time to scientific experiments in connection with chemistry, electricity, and the invention of machinery.

Coey was in great spirits that evening and, I noticed, levied a heavy toll on that thirty dozen of champagne which he had, according to his own account, provided for the yacht. The ladies were tired after their exposure to the wild north wind and spray, and labours among the codfish and bream, so they left us early in the evening. Under the influ-

ence of cigars and whisky-and-soda, Coey became almost uproarious. He soon began talking on his favourite topic, the promotion of companies, and boasting of his success in that direction.

"I'll tell you what it is," he said; "the middle-class English are a pack of fools. Stick a few coronets on a prospectus, and there 's thousands in yer pocket. Only spend money enough, and you get it all back in six months, with a thousand per cent. profit."

I looked at Pat. He was listening with grave attention.

"Many a good ship might be saved if she would only carry oil-bags," interjected Prince Rozan.

But Coey would not allow the topic of conversation to be changed.

"I daresay there 's something to be made out of it. The Patent Oil-Bag Ship-Saving Company would sound rather well with the First Lord of the Admiralty and a few naval men with handles to their names on the Board. City men and baronets ain't much good," and he shook his head. "A Lord Mayor 's useful, though. Sometimes there 's one to be had for a consideration—you know the sort of consideration I mean." He winked. "But it 's the real nobs you want—quite the upper crust. But bless me! they do cost a lot. Why, the last thing I started, I paid over fifty thousand for the names on the front page, without counting anything for newspaper men, hang 'em! Little good they ever did me."



"What did you pay them for?" I asked.

"Why, you ought to know; you're a lawyer," said Coey, with a drunken laugh. "Fancy you not knowing! I suppose you think if I did n't pay 'em to do me good, it was to do me harm. Not I. It was to prevent 'em doing me harm; that 's what they had the money for."

"I think it 's time we turned in," said the Prince, rising.

"Oh, hang it all!" cried Coey; "we can't turn in yet. It 's the first time we 've been jolly to-day, after that beastly salt water. This is what I like about yachting; a nice warm cabin and a good smoke. Come now, Rozan, we 've earned a jolly evening. Here, have some more whisky, Kilmore!"

"I have had quite enough, *Mister* Coey," said Pat with unusual sternness.

"All right," said Coey. "No offence. You won't mind me helping myself. I 've put you in for a good thing or two, you know."

"I 've had none of your money!" cried Pat, indignantly.

Coey laughed.

"Oh, have n't you? Hark at him! He has n't had any of my money! Come now, Kilmore, we 're all pals here. You 're not so green as to think that five thousand you got out of the Big Rift Mihe was made by your own cleverness, are you?"

"If I like to speculate in shares, I don't see what the Devil it 's got to do with you!" exclaimed Pat, angrily.

"You—don't—see—what—it 's—got—to—do—with—me, don't you?" said Coey, speaking with offensive deliberation and looking at him cunningly. He took a deep draught from his glass. "Do you mean to say you think I could n't have done that little deal for myself, as well as for you, and put the money into my own pocket?"

"You 're a liar!" cried Pat, and immediately afterwards apologised to Prince Rozan for losing his temper. Coey sat swaying slightly from side to side with an idiotic grin on his face.

"I am sorry the incident should have occurred," said the Prince; "but I think it would be better if we were to adjourn. You and he can settle any differences of opinion at some more fitting opportunity." And as he spoke he rose up, and looking at Coey, pointed to the door.

"Oh! did n't mean any offence—no offence," hiccoughed the Great Financier as he rose and rolled out of the cabin.

"When a man has drunk a little too much, he is apt to talk foolishly," said the Prince, "and we must not take him too seriously. Good night, Sir Patrick! Good night, Mr. Gilbert!"

Pat followed me to my stateroom.

"I say, old man," he said, anxiously. "Is there anything in it? Do you really think that he 's been bribing all those chaps to be Directors of his companies? He did n't pay me anything—I need hardly tell you that."

I was placed in a position of some difficulty.



Here was my dear simple-minded old friend, perfectly innocent of being made a tool of by this scamp—for so I deemed him—and as innocently receiving money from him, clearly not understanding the full import of the transaction. For some moments I stood silent; I had to collect my ideas. It is an unpleasant task to tell a man that he has been bribed without knowing it. I do not mind confessing that I shirked it.

“Of course, you were willing to be a Director of those companies,” said I, “whether he had done what he calls his ‘little deals’ for you or not?”

“Yes,” said Pat, gravely, “of course I was. I was just beginning to think what an idle life I was leading, and how I ought to have some kind of occupation. Then Coey came along and showed me how I could get my fifteen hundred a year by being a Director of some of those companies of his. Of course, if one’s a Director, one ought to receive a salary. The public can’t expect us to work for nothing. Why, old man, I was always going into the City. I lunched there quite three times a week. Gave up no end of time to it.”

“Perhaps,” I suggested, “Coey had found that some other men, whose names were worth having, would not work with him unless he made it well worth their while, and he had the impudence to class you with them.”

“Yes,” said Pat, with curious persistency, “that’s all very well; but he never paid me anything. He told me that if I bought a thousand

shares in some company or other—I even forget its name now—I should get a lot more money in a fortnight. So I gave him a cheque for a thousand, and before the end of the month he gave me a cheque for five thousand. That 's honest enough, is n't it ? ”

“ It 's honest enough so far as you are concerned,” I said, with a sigh. “ But if Coey could make four thousand for you in a fortnight, he could as easily have made it for himself. That 's the way he looks at it; so he calls it paying you out of his own pocket.”

“ Well, I call him a peculiarly dangerous sort of liar,” said Pat. “ I 've got one consolation,—that no one can call me dishonest; for I put the whole of the money on *Flyaway*, and have lost every penny of it. I am well out of the thing, I think.”

With this truly Hibernian view of the matter, he left me.



CHAPTER XIII

THE WHISPER OF A PLOT

THE storm raged furiously all the next day. Giving the comfort of the ladies as his reason, the Prince ordered the *Lorelei* to be kept on her floating anchor. We were surrounded by a heaving but unbroken patch of oily-looking water. It was wonderful to see great, crested billows bearing down upon us, and suddenly cover their white heads on feeling the influence of a few spoonfuls of oil.

Night came, and we were still there, drifting slowly—very slowly—southward, dragging the great sheet of canvas, held perpendicularly in the sea by a framework of wood, weighted on its lower edge.

Nothing more of an unpleasant nature had passed between Coey and Sir Patrick Kilmore. The Great Financier did not appear at breakfast, and before luncheon the Prince, taking Pat aside, told him that the exploiter of mines, bicycles, and the rest, desired him to express regret for the foolish remarks he had made on the previous evening. To this the Prince added a wish of his own, that for the general comfort of those on the yacht Sir Patrick would be good

enough to accept the apology, and as soon as possible forget what had been said.

"It would have given me all the pleasure in life," said Pat, when telling me what had happened, "to kick that blackguard Coey all round the deck; but, of course, I told the Prince I was delighted to fall in with his views, and that he need fear no further unpleasantness—at least, none so far as I was concerned."

But there was to be unpleasantness, and worse; and it came from a very unexpected quarter.

In the night the storm ceased as suddenly as it had risen, and when we turned out in the morning we found ourselves enveloped in fold upon fold of a clinging fog, so thick that it even hid the crosstrees. Not knowing for certain how far we had drifted, the Prince decided that it would be wiser for us to defer getting under weigh until the fog lifted. To while away the time, Pat got up a whist party in the main cabin, consisting of his wife, Rhona, and myself. Corine pleaded a headache, and retired to her stateroom, and Maurice, who, so his sister-in-law told me, hated cards like poison, went on deck. A great lover of fresh air was our young parson, and never stayed below a second longer than he could help. After pacing up and down the deck until he was tired, he fetched a pipe, and then must needs take into his head to climb into one of the boats, lie down on a rug at the bottom of it, and cover himself with a big oilskin coat. It was this somewhat eccentric proceeding which led up to the singular incident I am about to relate.



About half an hour before lunch time, we down below tired of the whist and dispersed, I going to my cabin to write a few letters, on the chance of catching a tourist steamer at the North Cape, and sending them home by her. I had hardly settled myself to write before the door was pushed open, and in walked the Rev. Maurice Kilmore, his face ashy white, and his hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes dripping with the fog.

"Hullo!" I greeted him. "You've got a chill, my friend. You make too light of this Arctic weather."

"I want to speak to you," he said, hurriedly. "Can you bolt your door? Is there any chance of our being overheard?"

His manner was alarming.

"What has happened?" I asked.

"I was lying in the boat, smoking," he said, looking round nervously, "when I heard voices close to me. 'The fog is fortunate,' said one; 'it gives a good excuse for delay.'—'None of them must be back, nor in reach of a telegraph office, until the end of the month,' said the other.—'Will that give them time to get the money and send it off to the island?' asked the first one. 'It will be difficult to keep them out of the way of things so long. Why not land them on an iceberg, or among the Laps somewhere, and let them try the overland route for a few hundred miles?'—'We have enough deaths on our conscience,' was the answer."

Here I interrupted Maurice.

"Who, in Heaven's name, was it?" I demanded.

"Wait until I come to the end," said he. "Of course, I can't give the exact words they used; but they went on talking of an island, fleeing from justice, of others who were concerned, and of some finally great and triumphant *coup* that had been made. And who do you think it was speaking?"

"Hang it all, man!" I said, impatiently, "out with it. Who was it? Who were they?"

"Come here," said Maurice. Bending forward, and putting his lips close to my ear, he whispered, "Prince Rozan and Coey."

I looked at him aghast—speechless.

"You had a warning," he said, gravely.

"What does it mean?" I asked him. "What do you make of it? Whose is this money to be got from England? Who is to be landed in Lapland? Who is to be delayed? Not us—surely not us?"

"I have told you all I know," said Maurice.

"It may all mean nothing, and have no reference to us whatever," I said, thoughtfully.

"It may mean nothing; it may mean the worst," was his answer. "What can we do?"

"We can fight," said I.

The clergyman's eyes brightened. "One Englishman's good for ten natives any day," said he. And I saw him lay his left hand involuntarily on the biceps of his sword-arm.

At that moment I heard a peal of girlish laughter on the deck above me, and the thought flashed



across me that I was suspecting Corine's father of infamy—of some deep-laid and terrible plot.

"Are n't we going too fast?" I said. "For two years or more Prince Rozan has been received into the best society in England. He is a man of learning, vast wealth, and polished manners. Can it be possible that he is what your story seems to imply?"

"I do not know; it is hard to say." And Maurice drew his delicate fingers across his forehead. "I am full of perplexity and fear. It is terrible to think of such a sweet girl as Miss Meynell at the mercy of a gang of scoundrels."

"Corine could not be the daughter of a scoundrel," I said positively.

"I will find out the truth," said Maurice, firmly, "if—hello! Who 's that?—what 's that?" he cried nervously.

A knock had come at the door. I unbolted it. It was one of the Hindoostanee servants, and I started back with the feeling that he was going to strike me. But it was only a summons to lunch.

"Say nothing of this to anyone until we have consulted further," I whispered to the clergyman as I followed him to the main cabin.

"Why, Maurice, how ill ye 're looking!" cried Lady Kilmore, as he took his seat.

"Try a drop of boy," said Coey.

"He 's been walking up and down the deck in the fog and got chilled," said I. The Rev. Maurice Kilmore had by no means recovered his equanimity;

nor, indeed, had I. I noticed that Rhona looked at him anxiously. From time to time during lunch he also eyed her, and when their eyes met both appeared confused, and looked down on their plates.

It may have been a coincidence, but it struck me as being very strange that the conversation should drift into the subject of icebergs. It was Rhona, I think, who asked if we were likely to see any.

"The genuine icebergs," said the Prince, "the great big fellows of a hundred feet or more high, are detached pieces of ice breaking away from the enormous glaciers which come down to the shore on the coast of Greenland. We may see a few, but it is not likely."

"Then they 're not bits broken off the edge of the frozen sea?" said Pat.

"No. We explorers call those floe-bergs."

"And have ye been an Arctic explorer?" asked Lady Pat.

"Well, yes, in a small way," said the Prince. "I once took the *Lorelei* beyond Nova Zembla. We wintered up a river in Russian Siberia, and the following summer continued our cruise to the Behring Sea. We made an expedition up the Yukon River, and found signs of gold in that bleak region. There may be a fortune in store for someone in that quarter of the world.* I may visit it again some day, and get our friend here to bring out a Yukon gold-mine."

* A singular prediction this, in view of recent discoveries at Klondike.—L. G.



"Imagine!" cried Lady Pat. "But, sure, Prince, ye 're rich enough."

"If you feel interested in Arctic exploration," said Rozan to Kilmore, "we could visit Spitzbergen; or might even make an attempt to reach Franz-Josef Land. But I have no news of the ice yet, and do not know what our chances would be."

"That would be grand," said Pat. "But should n't we want proper clothes, fur bags, and all that sort of thing? By Jove! what a lark it would be, going home and reading papers before the Royal what-d'-ye-call-'em Society, and shooting white bears."

"I hope you 'll land me in Norway first," said I, attempting a laugh.

"I have by no means forgotten your legal business, Mr. Gilbert," said the Prince. "You may rely on being in England in time for it."

I need hardly say that on the very first opportunity Maurice and I again took counsel together. One great source of perplexity was the difficulty of identifying any of the persons referred to in the course of the conversation overheard in the fog, for no names had been mentioned. But, none the less, matters looked black enough. Twice had I been warned by some unknown friend not to come on this voyage. Time was required by someone to remove money to what appeared to be a hiding-place. Certain persons were to be kept from communicating with their friends by telegraph, and perhaps detained in the far North by being landed in some

desolate region, where no ordinary means of conveyance were available. These were stubborn facts, and they had to be explained and faced. To place against these was the splendid record of our host, who had been a shining light in English society for so long; and Coey, though a coarse, vulgar man, was reputed to be a millionaire twice over. What possible reason could men such as these have to plot against comparatively insignificant individuals like ourselves, and to fear any communications we might make with friends in England? Even had there been a telegraph on board, what message in any way harmful to Prince Rozan or Coey could we possibly have sent or desired to send? For until Maurice had taken into his head to take a siesta in one of the ship's boats, none of us had the slightest suspicions concerning our host or his friend.

And then there was Corine. Never did a more honest and true pair of eyes beam out from a sweet English face.

"It's all very well to say Coey's all right because he's a millionaire," said Maurice; "but if he really has been acting as he said he did the other night, when he was half-seas over—*in vino veritas*, you know——"

"*In whisky veritas*," I interjected; "but no matter."

"I was saying," continued Maurice, "if he has really acted as he said he did with regard to those companies, why, surely, he is little better than a common swindler, for he must have more or



less ruined hundreds of people for his own benefit. There is only one name for buying an article for five thousand, and then selling it again to the public for a hundred thousand, gulling them into purchasing it with a list of titled personages who are going to manage the concern."

"I agree with you," said I; "but what are we to do next?—that 's the question we have to decide. Shall we tell your brother?"

"Pat 's a very good fellow, but——"

"Well?" I said.

"He 's impetuous, you know, and has n't got the sort of head-piece to work out an intricate question of this kind."

"Could we do anything by force?"

"If they were all natives, we might," said the ex-captain of Lancers; "but there are only six of the turbaned gentry, and about fifteen Italians. By the way, one of them 's an Englishman, and he seems rather a good fellow."

"Could you find out anything from him?"

"I might try," said Maurice. "I will. We must both keep our eyes and ears open; poke and pry about all over the yacht. Now that we have become suspicious we shall probably note things we previously overlooked."

As he spoke he went to the port-hole. "The fog seems to have lifted," he added. "Do you notice anything?"

"No," I said.

"We are moving through the water."

"Surely not! I'll go on deck and look round."

"Yes. You had better go alone. I'll await you here."

It was as he had said. The crew were even then hoisting on board the floating anchor. The jib, staysail, and big mainsail were set, and slight cat-paws of wind ever and anon bellied out the canvas, causing the *Lorelei* to steal quietly through the almost calm water. There was no one at the helm—at least, not aft.

I went and looked at the binnacle. The yacht was heading N.W., right away from the Norwegian coast!



CHAPTER XIV

ICE

AS soon as our floating anchor was stowed away, the foresail was set, the foretop- and topgallant-sails unfurled, and the electric motor began to work. I lingered at the stern, hoping that the *Lorelei's* course would soon be changed. But though the wind was southerly, and we could easily have made the Norwegian coast, she held on her course, heading for Greenland, which I calculated to be about three hundred miles distant.

Pat joined me.

"This is better," said he. "What speed she has!"

The thought flashed into my mind that perhaps through my friend I might be able to find out the intentions of Rozan, or, at least, let him understand that some of us on board were not oblivious of the course he was taking.

"Yes," said I, in answer; "at this rate of speed I suppose we shall reach Greenland in two or three days."

"Greenland! What d' ye mean?" exclaimed Pat, taking a cigar out of his mouth, and staring at me with his wide-open blue eyes.

"Why, Norway lies over there," said I, pointing over the stern; "and Greenland somewhere ahead of us, or over the port bow."

"Oh, you may be sure the Prince knows what he's about," said Pat, confidently. "Don't you have to tack, or something of that kind, to get where you want to go?"

"Yes, when the wind's ahead of you; but with this wind we could make the North Cape easily. Perhaps he wants to show you one of those icebergs he was talking about at lunch time. I should ask him if I were you. You see, it's rather important for me to be landed somewhere in Europe within the next few days. It may take me a long time getting home again."

"So it might," said Pat, amiably. "I'll ask him about it. I'm not really keen on seeing an iceberg, you know, though I certainly should like a shot at a Polar bear."

I left him standing there, went below to Maurice, and told him what had transpired. We determined to wait and see what reply Prince Rozan made to Pat's inquiries before taking any further steps. When travelling I usually carry a pocket aneroid. At its back is a small mariner's compass. I placed this useful little instrument with the compass face upward on Maurice's swinging cot, and sat watching it, hoping that it would soon denote a change of course.

An hour passed, and still the bowsprit of the *Lorelei* pointed due N.W.



"I think we had better show ourselves," said Maurice, at length. "If we spend so much time together it may be noticed."

We went on deck, and found the whole of our party lounging on deck-chairs in the stern.

"Hullo! Here comes the great mariner," cried Pat, as I approached. "I say, old man! we've been having a good laugh over your idea that we were bound for 'Greenland's icy mountains.'"

"Oh, really?" said I, with, I fear, a very poor attempt at a smile. "I suppose I was mistaken then."

"No, not altogether, Mr. Gilbert," said Prince Rozan, courteously. "We are certainly heading in the direction you supposed, but I know the ways of these latitudes better than you do, and have reason to expect a change of wind, which renders it desirable for us to hold on this course for a few hours."

I had always heard that the prevailing summer winds in the Arctic regions blew from the south, but deemed it unwise to argue the point. We were practically at this man's mercy.

Fear is said to be contagious, and at dinner that night, and during the rest of the evening, it almost seemed as if the unpleasant misgivings shared by Maurice Kilmore and myself were communicated, through some strange telepathic agency, to the rest of the party, all of whom seemed dull and *distract*. Maurice and Rhona commenced a game of chess, but left it unfinished. The rest of us took refuge in books. From time to time I looked up and twice

saw that Prince Rozan was stealthily regarding me. Placing my hand across my forehead, as if to shade my eyes from the light, I was able to look at him between my fingers, without his being aware of it, and saw that ever and again he gazed at me curiously and inquiringly, as if wondering—so my imagination led me to suppose—whether I suspected anything.

I slept but little that night, waking at short intervals, and anxiously scanning the little black-and-pearl dial of my compass. It was indeed a long reach to the N.W. we were making—far longer than could be necessary for any reasons connected with a possible change of wind. But in the morning, as soon as I went on deck, I saw that we were on the starboard tack, and that, unless the wind had changed, our course was somewhat different to that of the night before. Going to the binnacle, I found I was not mistaken. We were steering a few points east of north; but where that would take us I had no means of deciding with anything approaching accuracy, for the patent log was no longer on the taffrail, and I could not ascertain how many miles we had run during the night. Prince Rozan, who was talking to two of his Indian servants amidships, came down the deck towards me.

“What! still worrying over our course, Mr. Gilbert?” he said. “I think you’ll see the wisdom of our little manœuvre before the end of the voyage.”

I made some commonplace reply, and we began conversing on other topics.



During that day Maurice haunted the fore-castle from time to time, and in the evening whispered to me that he had succeeded in obtaining a few words with the English sailor, who rejoiced in the singular name of Blagg.

"He told me," said the young clergyman, "that the Prince is very eccentric in his movements when yachting—cruising here and there without any apparent reason, and often deferring making his port for several days if the breeze suits for a good sail seaward. Blagg says the crew are always complaining about it, as they don't get on shore often enough. He suggested nothing being wrong. I suppose we can only wait and watch?"

"I suppose so," said I, gloomily.

Two days—three days passed, and we were still out of sight of land. Kilmore and the ladies thought nothing of this. The yacht was well found; the Prince, to use Pat's expression, "did us right royally," and the objectionable Coey had, since his little outbreak, been infinitely less offensive. On the third day we again became enveloped in a thick blanket of fog, the sails hung limply, wet and dripping, and drops of water glistened on every spar and rope. Even in the cabins the air was reeking with moisture. I was pacing up and down the deck with Maurice, with whom my friendship was ripening, when we heard a slight grating noise along the vessel's side.

"We must have hit against something," said I, looking over.

The something, which was floating close to us, was white, flat, and a few square yards in extent.

"Why, what can it be?" said Maurice.

"Ice," I answered. "God only knows where we are being taken to."

"I think," said Maurice, gravely, "it is our duty to tell Pat, and we can then decide whether his wife and Rho—Miss Meynell should also be told. They are level-headed women, and their quick wits may perhaps help us to solve this serious problem."

We had an opportunity of communicating our fears to the Irish baronet the same afternoon, while the ladies were trying over some music in their own particular cabin, and the Prince and Coey were shut up in the laboratory. The three of us retired to my cabin, presumably for a quiet smoke, and then Maurice and I disclosed everything to Pat, who became as much alarmed as ourselves. He made one very shrewd remark:

"Coey 's a friend of Prince Rozan's; he 's a blackguard, and worse, and a man is to be known by his friends—though, by gad! I don't like to say anything about a man who is treating us so well as the Prince. I think we ought to tell Norah; she 's got a better head-piece than I have. Please yourself, Maurice, as to Rhona Meynell: you know more about her than I do."

The young clergyman's face flushed. "She is certainly a sensible girl," he said. "We can trust her not to do anything foolish. Let her be told."

"But how are we to get a chance of speaking to



them ? ” I queried. “ The Princess is always with one or the other of them, and we can’t suggest such terrible things to a girl concerning her father.”

“ Pat had better tell his wife to-night,” said Maurice, “ and— ” He hesitated.

“ You tell Rhona the first time you ’re alone with her, old man,” said Pat.

“ I will, if you think it best,” answered Maurice, gravely. “ Hark ! ” he cried ; “ did you hear that ? ”

There had come a heavy thud on the side of the yacht, followed by several lighter blows. Another fragment of ice had struck us !



CHAPTER XV

WE BORROW RIFLES

EXCEPT in the still watches of those Arctic nights, when the minds of ^{us} ~~we~~ poor harassed mortals were apt to run riot, and hold a grand parade of visionary fears, I think there was no hour of the twenty-four, during the period we remained on the yacht, that was so unpleasant as when we all met together at meals. To feel that we were sitting at the table with men whom ~~we~~ we feared, had the intention of marooning us; to accept the hospitality of one of them; to keep up an affectation of cheerfulness, and a conversation on ordinary topics, was so difficult as to be almost painful.

As Lady Pat entered the principal cabin before breakfast on the morning after we had taken Kilmore into our confidence, I guessed at once that she had been told the news. Rhona, however, was gay and bright as ever. Was there any chance of our reaching the North Pole? she wanted to know. —How truly lovely it was to be an Arctic explorer. —Did Prince Rozan think he could shoot a seal for her, from which to make a sealskin jacket?—Might she shoot one herself if there was one flopping about? And so on.



From time to time throughout that day small blocks of ice grated against the side of the *Lorelei*, and there seemed no doubt that during the night we had drifted considerably nearer the frozen sea. Once we saw a huge whale close to the yacht, and the Prince ordered the pinnace out in pursuit; but before it could be lowered, the great cetacean had disappeared, and it was deemed hopeless, if not dangerous, to follow it in the fog.

Soon after breakfast the young actress was warned of the dangers by which we seemed to be surrounded. Maurice it was who begged her to go into the ladies' saloon and try over a song with him, insisting that none of us should follow them until the practice, which he laughingly said would be a painful affair, was over. They played and sang a little. The music ceased, and looking through the open door I saw them engaged in deep conversation. Then the song went on again, and presently both came out into the main cabin.

I was making a pretence of reading. Maurice, bending over me, whispered in my ear, "I have told her. She bears the news bravely, as I knew she would. She is going to consult with Lady Kilmore. I shall go on deck and see if I can get anything further out of Blagg. I think we have a friend in him, if matters come to the worst."

I sat there for some time, looking at my book and vainly trying to understand it. Presently the cabin door opened, and Rhona reappeared.

"What! down here reading, Mr. Gilbert?" she

said; "and you are the one who laughs at fair-weather sailors. Put on a cap and take a constitutional on deck along with me."

I did as she wished. As we ascended the companion-ladder she said quietly: "Walls have ears, you know. I feel safer on deck. I should n't be surprised to find a whole system of telephones and telegraphs downstairs, recording everything we say, for that strange man's benefit. The yacht 's made up of dodgy little inventions. Now let us walk up and down here, and don't talk too loud. Maurice—I mean Mr. Kilmore has told me all about it. Do you know, I never quite liked our host? He is altogether too Eastern to please me."

"On the principle that everything that 's bad comes out of the East, I suppose?" I said.

"I never heard that before," she answered; "but I don't like his looks. He 's the sort of man you would n't like to meet on a dark night after quarrelling with him. Even Mr. Coey seems quite under his thumb. Now, what are you going to do?"

It is not altogether pleasant for a man, when he and his friends are placed in what appears to be a serious position, to be obliged to confess to a girl, who would naturally place reliance on him, that he proposes to do nothing. But there are many ways of expressing the same thing. I simply said that we three men had decided to await the course of events, and, at the same time, take the ladies into our confidence.



"You propose to tell Corine?" said Rhona, quickly.

"No. How could we possibly?"

"It would be a mad thing, certainly," she said, reflectively. "But there,—forgive me for speaking so plainly,—everyone can see you're mashed on her; and to be quite candid, there's no knowing what you may not tell her."

A man of education who is ardently in love can hardly help being hurt if his feelings towards the object of his affections are described in the language of City clerks and barmaids. But it was no time to be hypercritical on the subject of expressions used by a young actress, so I simply pooh-poohed the idea; whereat Rhona assured me that I might deny it, but she had seen it from the very first, and that there was no deceiving her.

"As to that," I retorted, "everyone can see that you are 'mashed,' to use your own horrid word, on your anchorite."

"And what if I am?" she said, defiantly. "He's the best-looking man in the ship, and so far as I can see, he has done more than any of you to ferret out this mystery. He, at least, has made some inquiries of the crew."

"Well, we won't go into that matter," said I. "Let us drop personalities. Give me your and Lady Kilmore's views, if you have any, as to our course of action."

"Lady Kilmore thinks we had better dissemble," said Rhona, who, it seemed to me, was really enjoy-

ing the situation, rather than being alarmed by it. Perhaps the world had, thanks to her beauty, cleverness, and brightness, always treated her so well, that she looked to those natural gifts as a guarantee of good treatment, even at the hands of a gang of robbers. We men might be marooned, but she would come out of it all right.

"How, in Heaven's name, are we to dissemble?" I asked—"more than we are doing?"

"There, don't be irritable!" said Rhona. "What Lady Pat means is that she and I should make ourselves as charming as possible to Prince Rozan and Mr. Coey, and try and win their good graces more than we have already. After all, they're only men, and the better humour we can keep them in, the better we shall be treated. If we all grow sullen and cantankerous, like someone I could mention, the Prince may say, if he is what you suspect him to be, the sooner he gets those bears with sore heads off the *Lorelei* the better, and that an iceberg is the proper place for them."

"Which of us is the bear with a sore head, Maurice or I?"

"I don't find any fault with Maurice," said Rhona.

"Then I——"

"Exactly! But we agreed to drop personalities, didn't we? Well, I was going on to say that Lady Pat intends to try and find out something more about the Prince's antecedents from Corine."

"You surely don't think Corine would have any-



thing to do with a diabolical plot against us?" I said hastily.

"No, I don't think that," she replied, with some hesitation—"at least, not exactly. But if her father's an adventurer, she has probably found it out by this time."

I was much inclined to say a good deal on the subject of Corine's beauty and sweetness, and the impossibility of her being in any way connected with the schemes of an adventurer, but, perhaps wisely, forbore. Women are not always over-charitable to their own sex.

"There's one thing I must say about Corine," added Rhona. "She has been fearfully dull and depressed for the last few days, and said to me more than once that she wished we had reached Norway. Here's Sir Pat coming out of the fog. His wife says he's awfully upset."

"You've been told?" were Kilmore's first words.

"Yes," said Rhona.

"That's all right. I say, Lucas, look here! There's one thing we really ought to do, and that is, tell the Prince, in a quiet way, you know, that we expect to be taken to Norway as soon as he can get us there. Not on our own account, of course; but because of the ladies. We must hatch up some story about their being nervous among the ice."

"Won't that be rather awkward?" suggested Rhona; "for I really am longing to see an iceberg, and sail in and out through the ice-floes, and hear the pressure ridges going off with a report like a

cannon, and be nipped in the ice, and do the regular thing; and I said so at breakfast, worse luck!"

"You are likely to have your wish," said I. "Without much doubt these scattered pieces of ice, which keep grinding against the *Lorelei*, have been broken off some large ice-floes not far distant."

"Well, anyhow," said Kilmore, "women are permitted to change their minds, and pretty rapidly they do it, too, sometimes; so I don't think anything Rhona said at breakfast matters very much. Now, who 's to beard the Prince?"

"You, certainly," said I, "as owner of one of the ladies in question. But you can't ask him to do anything until this fog lifts. Here we are, and here we must be for the present, I am afraid."

Now, it was a most singular coincidence, but it actually occurred, that just as I was commenting on the necessity of lying to, during the continuance of the fog, a breeze sprang up, and within five minutes the whole of the mists rose from the surface of the sea, as if by magic, and were wafted quickly away to leeward.

It was indeed a wintry and desolate scene around us. A few miles to the northward lay two great fields of ice, between which was a narrow channel of rippling water; while between us and the frozen sea were several ice-floes of considerable magnitude. To the southward there was some scattered ice, but not much.

Whether Prince Rozan was summoned on deck, or noticed the change in the weather, I do not



know, but in a very short time he appeared, and scanned the horizon in every direction through a telescope. Kilmore went up to him, while Rhona and I sauntered carelessly by and leaned over the bulwark within hearing distance.

"Oh—er—" said Kilmore, "the ladies—my wife and Miss Meynell, you know—don't altogether relish this Arctic exploration business. I hope you don't mind me mentioning it?"

"Certainly not," said the Prince. "But, of course, they understand that it is more or less involuntary on my part. As you know, the storm we encountered after leaving the Lofoten Islands somewhat influenced our plans."

"How long do you think it will take us to reach the Norwegian coast?" asked Kilmore, with a really splendid affectation of carelessness.

"Well, to tell you the truth," said the Prince, with a laugh, "I don't exactly know where we are. It has been some days since I have had an opportunity of taking an observation, and I have lost my reckoning. When these clouds disperse, and we get a chance of seeing the sun, I may be able to answer your question. But having come so near the ice, I think we will go ahead a little and give the ladies a nearer view of the floes. I am sure that will please them. And then we will think of heading for Norway."

Very soon the propeller was in motion, and with a few sails set, we were gliding slowly through the calm water in the direction of the ice-fields. I did



not know enough of the navigation in the Arctic regions to form an accurate judgment on the possible dangers of the situation, but I could not help feeling that the farther north we went, the more likely we were to be caught in the ice, without, perhaps, an opportunity of breaking out again. To winter in those seas would be a serious matter. I pointed this out to Maurice, who was standing by my side, rifle in hand, looking out for a shot at a seal.

"I have n't much fear on that score," said he, "for the simple reason that what would be dangerous to us would be equally dangerous to Rozan himself, who, if he speaks truly, has been in these latitudes before, and knows something about Arctic exploration. But, I say, old fellow, if Rozan is what we fear he is—if he's got murders on his conscience, as he half hinted in that conversation I overheard—don't you think, where so many valuable lives are at stake, I should be justified in treating him as I am trying to treat one of those gentle-eyed seals?"

The Church was becoming militant indeed.

"I suppose," he went on, "if one of us were to shoot him we should all be murdered by his Indian servants and the crew. Not that we should n't have followers among the crew, mind you, because they are anything but satisfied. Why, Blagg even talks of mutiny."

"It would n't be a bad plan," said I, "for you to take that rifle to your cabin, and always keep it handy. You can easily make the excuse that a seal



or a porpoise may pop up at any time, and you want to be ready to shoot at it."

"If we were all to show an interest in rifle-shooting," said he, "and could get arms in the same way, I should feel very much safer, should n't you?"

"Yes, very much," I answered. And before dinner I, too, had borrowed a rifle on the pretence of seal-shooting. I narrowly scanned Rozan's face when I asked for the weapon, but he answered me in the most matter-of-fact way, and without the slightest demur told me to take one from the rack in Coey's cabin.

We suggested the acquisition of a rifle to Pat, but found he had a revolver. It seemed he always carried one when travelling, though, Irish fashion, he kept it at the bottom of his box, and might have been killed half-a-dozen times over before he could possibly get at it for the purpose of defence. As he was sufficiently armed, we decided, to avoid raising any suspicions, that he should show no interest in rifle-shooting. Thus we had between us, two rifles and a revolver, and practically an unlimited amount of ammunition, for the Prince had produced several boxes of cartridges and told us to help ourselves as we pleased.



CHAPTER XVI

COUNTERPLOT

WHAT I most particularly dreaded was, that on reaching the great fields of ice ahead of us, Prince Rozan would order the yacht to be taken through the channel, which might close behind us. It was then past the middle of August, and winter falls early in those latitudes. Once held in the grasp of the ice, we might have to stay in the Arctic regions until the following summer. I had no reason to suppose that the *Lorelei* was specially built for work of this kind, and from what I had read of Arctic exploration I knew there was a danger of the yacht being nipped. In that case the only chance of safety for us would be to rig up such shelter as we could on the ice, and encamp there. Strong men alone could withstand the rigour of the Polar winter under such conditions. It would be death to my beautiful Corine and her companions.

I was in no small degree relieved, then, on nearing the ice, to see the vessel bear away to the eastward. The wind had fallen now, the sails were lowered, and we moved slowly through the water by means of the propeller. As we skirted the edge of



the ice, scattered pieces were continually coming in contact with the bows of the *Lorelei*, which more than once I thought would have been stove in. But the schooner must have been strongly built, for she withstood the shocks magnificently. I greatly feared, too, the upspringing of a gale from the southward, for this ice represented a lee shore, and if the wind rose suddenly we might be wrecked on the floes, particularly if our stock of electricity had run out and our oil fuel was exhausted.

Under other circumstances we should have revelled in the novelty and great beauty of the scene: To the northward the great ice desert, with hummocks of fantastic shapes arising here and there; above it the sky, of a pale, silvery whiteness, caused by the reflection of the ice. To the southward, where was open water, the sky was darker. Now and again the head of a seal arose from the sea, regarded us for an instant with liquid, almost human eyes, and then as instantly disappeared. Once we saw a great, tusked bull walrus lying on the edge of the ice. Maurice fired at this huge lion of the sea, but missed him, and the immense creature slid back into the water with a roar. Lovely Arctic gulls, fulmars, and other sea-birds circled around us, and twice during the day we saw long strings of geese flying southward.

Rhona, having once seen the intelligent and almost pathetic face of a seal rise for an instant near the bows of the vessel, so fell in love with these beautiful creatures, that she begged Maurice not

to slay one. It was too much like murder, she said.

In the afternoon Lady Pat took advantage of the Prince and Coey being in the laboratory to collect us together on the stern of the vessel.

"I have been talking to Corine," she said, "and I like the look of things less than ever. I tried to find out what she could tell me about the Prince, but it seems she was brought up in a convent from a little girl, and knew next to nothing of him herself until two or three years ago, when she joined him in Afghanistan. Then they went on to Italy, and from there to London. She seems awfully upset, and in fact, I'm after thinking she's more nervous than we are. I asked her, Will we reach Norway soon?—but all she could tell me was that she knew nothing, but hoped and prayed it would be so."

"I never saw a girl so changed," said Rhona. "I thought she was a regular plucky one when I first got to know her, but lately she has been ready to shriek out at the slightest noise."

"And have ye noticed how pale she's getting?" said Lady Pat. "There's no doubt in the world she's worrying, and regularly unhappy. I don't think there's much love lost between her and that swarthy father of hers; and how could there be when you consider the little she's seen of him until the last year or two?"

"Whatever the dark designs of her father may be," said I, "we may feel certain that she takes no part in them."



"That I'm sure she does n't," said Lady Pat, and I was grateful to her for her opinion.

Several days passed, and still we went slowly onward, using our sails but little, and always keeping within sight of the ice. So long as the *Lorelei* was steered east, or a little to the south of east, it seemed to me that we could not do better than await the course of events; for we were bound, sooner or later, to reach the coast of Norway. As nearly as I could guess, we must have been, when we first reached the ice, some few miles southward of Bear Island, and in a day or two the mountains of the Norwegian coast should have shown above the horizon. There was no doubt that the plan of steering from the bows of the vessel was an admirable one when ice-floes and scattered pieces of ice had to be evaded. The Prince was now a great deal on deck, evidently taking the leading part in the navigation of the vessel. Above the crosstrees of the foremast he had rigged up the contrivance used on whaling ships called a crow's-nest, where a lookout man was stationed day and night.

While Maurice made a pretence of shooting, Kilmore and I spent the long days searching again and again through telescopes on every side for the slightest indication of land. Many times our hopes were raised by distant lines of low-lying clouds which assumed the shapes of mountains; but no land came in sight.

"Are we not bound to reach land if we follow this course far enough?" said I to Prince Rozan one

afternoon. "I suppose there 's no doubt about that ?"

"None whatever," said he; "but we are still a good many miles from Norway. You see, our progress is slow. I dare not go at any great speed, and run the risk of wrecking the *Lorelei* on a floeberg."

He seemed to have reason on his side, and I said no more at the moment.

That night I could not sleep, and tossed restlessly and wearily in my cot for hours. About one o'clock in the morning I switched on the electric light, intending to read, but first consulted my compass, as I was in the habit of doing frequently. I found that we were then heading due south. For a moment or two I could not understand this, but speedily came to the conclusion that our course had been changed for reasons of safety. Beyond question the farther south we went, the less likelihood there was of coming in contact with floe-bergs. I read for a while, and fell into a light doze, but was awakened by my book slipping off my lap on to the floor of the cabin. As soon as I was fully awake I again looked at the compass, and to my horror saw that our course now was N.W.W., one which would take us, not to Norway, but in almost the opposite direction, and probably bring us into the Greenland Sea, the nearest land to which would be Greenland on the one side, and Spitzbergen on the other. The eastern shores of Greenland we could not possibly reach, as these, not feeling the influence of the



Gulf current, are, winter and summer, guarded by great fields of ice. The western shores of Spitzbergen, on the other hand, were open at this time of year. Was it possible, I asked myself, that Prince Rozan had suddenly determined to leave us on one of those desolate islands, where our only chance of life depended on falling in with the crew of a chance whaler or sealing vessel ?

I dressed quickly, and went on deck. All sails were set, and we were dashing quickly through the water. There was no one visible. It was a sunny, breezy morning, and sea and heavens were alike a brilliant blue, except to the northward, where the reflected light from the ice-fields sent up a white glare into the sky. I went to the binnacle, and saw that the ship's compass practically agreed with mine. Unnoticed, I returned to my cabin, threw myself on the cot, and tried vainly to think out the object of this man in taking such an eccentric course.

We did not breakfast until nine o'clock, and when we men went on deck to smoke our pipes, I called Maurice and Kilmore to me, and told them that we were again being taken away from our destination.

Maurice walked over to the binnacle.

"You are wrong," he said. "See! we are steering S.E., which is surely all right for Norway."

It was as he had said. At night, then, we were being taken away from land, with all sail set; but during the day the yacht was worked slowly towards Norway. If this plan had been followed for the



past five or six days, we had perhaps not advanced a single mile on our journey. No wonder that we had not yet sighted land! Here clearly was a cleverly worked out scheme to keep us in the Arctic Ocean, at the same time leading us to suppose that we were voyaging towards the North Cape. The yacht was being worked more or less in a circle. I explained this to my friends.

"It's kidnapped we are," said Pat.

"If we were to seize the ship," said Maurice, suddenly, "are you navigator enough to take us to land, Gilbert?"

I told him I had no doubt about that. I could not undertake to steer the vessel within a hundred miles of any particular point, but there was no difficulty as to reaching civilised regions once more. As soon as we got in the track of vessels, we could obtain all the assistance we required.

"The only difficulty I fear," said I, "is the working of all this complicated machinery, which none of us understand."

"Faith!" said Pat, "if we hold a pistol to one of their heads, there's little to-do he'll make about working the machinery for us."

"We cannot possibly seize the ship," said Maurice, "unless some of the crew are on our side; but from all Blagg tells me, there are at least four of them who would more gladly work for us than for those adventurers. We three can account for Rozan and Coey, if Blagg and his men can arrange to clap down the hatches and keep the rest of the



crew prisoners until such time as we can come to terms with them."

Maurice's suggestion led to a long consultation which I need not set out at length. In the end we decided that at noon the following day, when the crew were at dinner, Blagg and three other sailors were to close the hatches and keep guard over the rest of the crew. Lady Kilmore and Rhona were to get Corine into one of their cabins, and keep her there on some pretence. Meanwhile, Kilmore, Maurice, and myself were to place such coercion on Rozan and Coey as might be necessary.

"There must be no bloodshed, if it can possibly be avoided," said Maurice. "But though I am a man of peace, I do feel that it might be necessary, for the safety of us, and those we hold dear, to make an example if matters come to the worst. I believe that dark-skinned Prince would as soon cut our throats as look at us, and if we are too gentle in this undertaking we shall assuredly suffer for it. We must act swiftly and determinedly, and hold no parley. Once in possession of the yacht we can dictate our own terms."

"It's quite on the cards that Rozan and Coey carry revolvers," said I. "Men of that type often do."

"In that case," said the young clergyman, sternly, "those who shoot first, win. The sailors who act with us will expect a reward of some kind. What shall I promise them?"

Kilmore thought a hundred pounds apiece would



150 THE PASSING OF PRINCE ROZAN

be sufficient, and with authority to offer this sum to each disaffected member of the crew, Maurice went forward to endeavour to obtain a word with their leader, Blagg.



CHAPTER XVII

THE FIGHT FOR THE "LORELEI"

THERE was little sleep for me that night. Over and over again the strange course of circumstances which had led up to our serious position passed in review before me. The risk of our undertaking was great, and if we failed we should be ten times worse off than before. From time to time I turned on the electric light and looked at my compass, and saw that the tactics of other nights were being repeated, the yacht being sailed over very much the same course that it had taken during the day, but in the opposite direction.

Looking back over the strange series of events which had taken place that summer, I began to have a suspicion that there must be some connection between the swindler, King, and this foreign Prince. Coey was one of the Prince's most intimate friends; it was Coey who first wished me to go on this voyage; Coey who had shown himself interested in the trial at the Old Bailey; Coey who had given King his, at least temporary, freedom, without rhyme or reason, so far as I could see, by going bail for him. Why had they wanted me on the yacht ?

How was it our party was limited to Lady Pat and her friends? Where were those other people who, according to Coey, had been invited to join in the cruise? It seemed almost as if we were the innocent victims of a daring plot; and yet, where was the motive? What object could Prince Rozan, or even Coey, have in detaining us practically as prisoners on the yacht in these Arctic regions, far from communication with our friends? It could not be revenge, for none of us had harmed either of them, or, so far as I knew, affected their material interests in any way. And yet there had been this cold-blooded suggestion to place us on an ice-field and leave us there, or, which was almost as bad, land us on the shores of Northern Europe, far from civilisation, and with a terrible journey before us. Well, we had come to a decision. We would fight if needs be, and the morrow would see the end of it.

It seemed as if day would never come. I longed to dress and go on deck, but dared not for fear of exciting suspicion. About four o'clock in the morning there came a fierce wind from the west, the worst we had encountered since leaving the Lofoten Islands. When at last I left my cabin, I found the sea had risen, and the yacht was labouring heavily. Dimly to the northward I could make out ice-floes, and the silvery-grey ice-light in the sky. But we were sailing in open water. Once or twice we took a green sea over the bows, which swept the yacht from stem to stern, and made her quiver and shake again. The sky above us was



dark and lowering, and the sails and rigging were dripping water, from the spindrift which was continually flying over us. It was a fitting overture to the drama we had prepared the previous day.

Lady Kilmore and Rhona, who had been instructed in the part they had to play, and been told of the desperate endeavour we meant to make at noon, carried their fears so plainly in their faces, hard though they tried to appear at ease, that a man with less intellectual power and penetration than Prince Rozan must have felt that something serious was in the wind. But the heavy seas we were encountering, and the rolling and pitching of the yacht, were sufficient to alarm even seamen; and so I was thankful for the storm, as providing a reason for the set, strained faces of these poor women.

I was in my cabin after breakfast, when one of the Indian servants, who knew a word or two of English, came to the door and asked for the sealing rifle, to clean it. I could not refuse to give up the weapon, though I did so reluctantly enough. Meeting Maurice Kilmore shortly afterwards, I discovered that he had done the same. Unarmed, we could effect nothing; it would not be safe to move. We should have to defer taking action until another time. But half an hour afterwards the rifles were returned to us.

Slowly the hours rolled on—slowly indeed, each second seeming a minute, each minute an hour. So far as Blagg and the mutinous portion of the crew were concerned, Maurice assured me that all was

well. Exactly at twelve o'clock the hatches would be closed, and if we three men succeeded in coercing the Prince and Coey, the *Lorelei* was ours.

A few minutes before noon the Kilmores and I were crouching on deck, under the lee of the cabin skylights, our two rifles hidden under our long oil-skin coats. The wind had, if anything, increased, and the seas were terrific. Sail had been reduced to a minimum, but still we travelled fast through the water, save when stopped by a mountainous sea breaking and striking the bows of the vessel. We spoke little. Our plans were laid, and we only waited to see the sailors who were acting with us appear on deck. Maurice, so it had been arranged, was to cover Coey with his rifle, while Sir Patrick Kilmore was to deal with the Prince. I was to be a kind of reserve guard, giving aid to whichever of them might require it.

At last we saw the fore-hatchway lifted, and a man struggle on to the slippery deck. He was followed by two more. The first comer looked toward us, held up his hand, and Maurice signalled back. Then, with clenched teeth, we hurried below as quickly as the rolling and plunging of the vessel would allow. The ladies, I was thankful to see, were nowhere visible. The main cabin was deserted, and so was the little saloon beyond. Those whom we sought were probably closeted in the laboratory. We went there and knocked authoritatively. The Prince himself flung open the door. But was this Rozan? It almost seemed like a new man—some



wild, angry creature glaring at us with flaming eyes. Behind him I could just see Coey, trembling, with face blanched.

"Well," cried Rozan, "you want me, I suppose?"

"Hold up your hands, or we shoot!" was Maurice's reply, as he levelled the rifle at him.

The Prince laughed, a cool, derisive laugh. With a sudden quick movement he flung himself upon Sir Patrick Kilmore, and the sharp crack of the revolver echoed through the saloon. I heard the click of Maurice's rifle, but no report, and saw that Coey was lying on the ground. There was blood on his face. Instantly the whole cabin seemed peopled with men. I felt myself seized from behind, but had time to point my rifle at the Prince and press the trigger. There was again a harmless click, and I knew that my weapon had been tampered with. Then I heard the barking of Lady Kilmore's dogs, the ejaculations of women, and the chattering of the Indian servants, and had a vision of Corine standing there, pale and trembling, and Rhona and Lady Kilmore clinging to one another.

The scene gradually cleared, and I found myself lying on the floor of the cabin, held firmly down by three sailors. It was useless to struggle. We had played our game and lost!

Maurice, panting like some hunted animal, was writhing, twisting, and straining every muscle to free himself from—yes!—good God! Blagg, of all men! We had, then, been befooled. Pat was

standing up helplessly, his wrists being tied together with cords. Once the vessel lurched so heavily that Maurice and his captors fell to the ground. Freeing himself from them, he threw himself upon the Prince. Then there flashed out a long knife, and I thought the end of my poor friend's life had come. But there was a woman's shriek, and a second later I saw Rhona struggling in the arms of one of the Indian servants, and Maurice again firmly held back by sailors.

Coey had scrambled to his feet, and was holding his left hand to the side of his head, blood trickling from the wound down his coat sleeve. Going up to Kilmore, and shaking his fist in his face, he poured out a torrent of the vilest abuse.

"You shall suffer for this," he cried,—“you and your pretty, sneering lady too. You shoot me?—I who made you what you are? Who set you, a miserable, pauper Irish baronet, on your legs, and saved you from the Bankruptcy Court? Order him to be thrown down into the hold, Prince Rozan—he and his wife, and those damned dogs of theirs.”

“Father, keep that man quiet!” cried Corine. “What has Lady Kilmore done to be insulted like this?”

But Prince Rozan was silent.

“Leave the cabin,” the Princess said authoritatively to Coey. “These are fine manners for the steward of the *Lorelei*.”

Coey cowered before her. He stopped his abuse, and slunk behind some of the crew.



"Prince Rozan! I will not be held by these men!" cried Rhona. "Why am I treated like this?"

The Prince said a word or two in some foreign language, the girl was released, and took her place by the side of Lady Kilmore.

There was a dead silence in the cabin. As for ^{us} ~~we~~ men, we had lost the day. It was for the victors to do with us as they would. The Prince, who had been panting with excitement after his struggle with Kilmore, had now recovered himself, and stood looking sternly and angrily at his prisoners.

"Well," he said at length; "so this is the way in which the English people treat a foreigner who surrounds them with every luxury wealth can provide. This is English gratitude, I suppose."

"You held us prisoners," cried out Maurice, "and——"

"Be quiet!" I whispered. I was standing sufficiently close to him to speak without being overheard by the Prince. "We are in a devil of a mess, and the less said the better."

"You will be my prisoners *now*," said the Prince, "and you shall be treated like prisoners. Coey, let them be taken to their cabins. Keep them there; feed them on ship's biscuits and ship's water, and leave them to ponder on the sin of ingratitude."

"And the women, too?" said Coey.

"Yes," said the Prince, sternly. "Put Lady Kilmore in a separate cabin from her husband. They would only hatch up another plot if together."



158 THE PASSING OF PRINCE ROZAN

Lady Kilmore implored the Prince to reverse his decision, but to no purpose.

“Quick! Get them out of my sight!” he said. And we were hurried off, flung roughly into our cabins, and the doors closed upon us.



CHAPTER XVIII

PRISONERS OF WAR

SITTING in my stateroom, a prisoner, I was a prey to the most bitter reflections. It is easy to be wise after the event. Why, I asked myself, again and again, had I been fool enough to fall in with Maurice Kilmore's suggestion—to attempt force? In contending against a wily Afghan, we should rather have resorted to stratagem and diplomacy. Maurice, it seemed to me, had been blinded by his love for Rhona, and his fears that she would suffer. We must fight if needs be, he had said, for those who were dear to us; and calling to mind many significant little incidents, I had no doubt whatever that the one most dear to him was Rhona. Rhona, too, had risked her life to save his; for the knife raised to stay him in his onslaught on Rozan might easily have been buried in her bosom. A girl must love a man to act thus.

But perhaps what troubled me even more than our dreadful position was the hopelessness of my ever gaining Corine's good graces. What could she think of a man who had joined with those who endeavoured to seize her father's yacht by force,

and were prepared to kill him if they could not otherwise subdue him? I had so set my heart on gaining this woman's love, that even now I thought of little else, though there loomed vaguely through my mind the fears of the vengeance which might overtake us. What would be our fate? What penalty would be exacted by this Afghan Prince, who appeared to deem us guilty of treachery and ingratitude?

There was a splendid library on board, containing many books about India, and in these I had been diligently reading all that I could find concerning Afghanistan and its people. One particular passage came into my mind and simply haunted me:

The Afghans are apparently frank and affable in manner, especially when they hope to gain some object, but capable of the greatest brutality when that hope ceases. They are passionate in vindictiveness, which they will satisfy even at the cost of their own lives, in the most cruel manner.

If this statement was true, and Rozan had all the characteristics of his race, what had we to expect? For some reason, as to which I was still in the dark, he or his lieutenant, Coey, had coolly talked of leaving us all to such poor chance of life as might be found on an ice-field, or Northern Siberia. What could we expect now, when we had aroused their hatred and vindictiveness by our organised attack, and attempt to suborn the crew?

I would have given much to be able to communicate with Sir Patrick Kilmore, or his brother, but I



was kept a close prisoner. A swarthy Indian, with pistol in belt, ever kept guard outside the door of my stateroom, and attended to my few wants. I had some thought of writing a message, enclosing it in a bottle, and dropping it through the port-hole, on the vague chance of it leading to our rescue. But the fierce gale which had arisen the night before our futile attempt to seize the *Lorelei*, blew for the best part of a week, and it was impossible for me to open the port without deluging my stateroom with water. Indeed, I was doubtful if I should have been able to close it again. I dared not make the experiment.

We had been ordered by the Prince to have hard fare, and the order was obeyed to the letter. In place of the luxurious repasts which had been provided for us, we—I found afterwards that the others had been similarly treated—had a scant allowance of ship's biscuits, occasionally a little bread, and water which was none too sweet, for we had been some time at sea. I think this diet so weakened me, that as the days went on I began to take a more black and desponding view of our position than I should otherwise have done.

The course of the vessel was as much a mystery to me as ever. Now that we had forced Prince Rozan to remove the mask, I thought he would most certainly have made for some destination. Maurice, it may be remembered, had heard remarks let fall as to an island, a kind of *dépôt* to which treasure was to be removed. I fully expected the yacht to be taken to this place; but still she was

steered the same contradictory course, which, so far as I could judge, would keep us out in the open sea, far from land.

It was, if I remember aright, on the sixth day of our captivity that an incident occurred which put new life and fresh hopes into me. At intervals the guard at my door was relieved, and as nearly as I could judge, from the murmured conversations which took place when the men changed places, this occurred about every four hours. It was, indeed, only the alterations in the vessel's course, and the changing of the guard, which made the slightest breaks in the monotonous life I was leading. I used to sit, watch in hand, waiting for the voices of the Indians changing guard, and then would dream away the time until the same incident again occurred. But on this morning the four hours elapsed, and I heard nothing. I could just make out, by peering through the crack of the door, that a man was standing there. While watching there I was amazed to hear a woman say, "Nadir has forgotten you. Go call him to his post. I will stay here."

The sound of the man's footfalls died away down the passage. Quickly I tried the handle of the door, hoping to have one word with Corine, for it was she, and learn the fate of the Kilmores and Rhona. I had no thought of escape; that was obviously impossible.

I found that the door was firmly fastened on the outside, so softly called out "Corine!" but my love made no answer. I was about to throw myself dis-



consolately on my cot, when I heard a slight scraping sound and saw something white and small—not more than an inch or two in size—showing beneath the edge of the door. I was on my knees in a second. It was a piece of cardboard. Swiftly I seized it, and found it to be another such missive as those sent me so mysteriously at the close of the ball, and the night of my arrival on the *Lorelei*. It consisted of a few words only:

“HOPE FOR THE BEST. YOU HAVE ONE FRIEND ON BOARD. DESTROY THIS.”

I pressed the message to my lips, because—well, because Corine was the writer. A minute later I heard a footstep outside, and knew that the guard was relieved. I would have given much to preserve this tiny letter from my darling, but the risk was too great—for her as for me. So I faithfully carried out my orders by burning it, rubbing the ashes of the paper between my hands, and sprinkling the fine powder about the floor of my cabin.

Little I cared now for captivity, or prison fare, for my heart told me that Corine loved me, and must have regarded me with affection even before we set out on our voyage, or she would never have warned me, almost a stranger to her, of the dangers to which I was rendering myself liable.

Several days passed without any incident worthy of record. Never, perhaps, was a man in so desperate a situation as myself so happy and light-



hearted. Now that I knew I had Corine's love, it was enough for me to be on the same ship with her, even though a captive. This may read foolishly enough to those who have never loved, or have forgotten what love means; but there are men and women who will understand.

The storm through which we had been labouring was succeeded by a spell of calms, during which we drifted about aimlessly, the electric propeller not being used. I passed much of my day gazing out through the port-hole, over the wide expanse of water. We seemed now to be quite clear of the ice. I thought we might perhaps have seen a passing vessel, yet I hardly wished to be rescued, for rescue meant taking me away from Corine.

But there came a day when a vessel, no doubt a whaler, hove in sight, and I was fated, in consequence, to learn more of the strange man who had us in his power. Nearer and nearer came the vessel, so near, indeed, that I could see the heads of men above her bulwarks. I was trying to make out her flag, when suddenly I heard shouts, loud voices, and fierce exclamations, not far from me, coming, as well as I could judge, from the direction of Maurice Kilmore's stateroom. The vessel passed on her way.

Some hours elapsed and my door was suddenly thrown open. Coey and the Indian servant appeared. This was no longer the Great Financier as I had known him, but a man clad in the plain blue suit of a yacht's steward.



"You are to come on deck," he said. "Bind his hands!"

I protested against the indignity. I would give them my word of honour, I said, to make no attempt to escape, and to do no one any injury.

"It's the Prince's orders," said Coey. "Submit quietly, or we must use force."

There was nothing for it but to obey, and with sore misgivings I had my hands tied behind me, and was marched on deck. There I saw, standing in a row by the bulwarks, and near that long, narrow craft which, all through our voyage, had been kept from our sight by its canvas covering, the Kilmores and Rhona, looking depressed, weak, and ill. I was about to speak to them, when Coey stopped me.

"Silence!" he ordered. "Stand here! The Prince will speak to you."

I had hoped for a glimpse of Corine, but she did not come in sight. We had waited there, perhaps, a quarter of an hour, not venturing even to whisper a word of comfort to each other, when Prince Rozan came on deck. He was no longer dressed as an English yachtsman, but in Indian attire, and carried a sword.

"I thought it well," he said, "to let you into one other of the secrets of my yacht. You," he said, looking at Maurice sternly, "sought to make my crew mutinous, and to take me prisoner. I hardly know why I did not have you thrown into the sea, instead of troubling myself to keep you on board. Perhaps I have a still more unpleasant fate for you."



I looked at Rhona's face as he spoke. The poor girl seemed ill with apprehension. Her eyes were full of tears, and she could hardly stand.

"You thought," continued the Prince, still looking at Maurice, "to get assistance from the crew of that vessel," and he pointed over the stern to the whaler, which was now hull down on the horizon. "I will let you know what would have happened had they sought to board me. Blagg! take the covering off this boat!"

The English sailor and several others quickly obeyed him, and disclosed a long, narrow launch, the forepart of which was covered with a turtle deck. On each side of its bows was a round hole, some eighteen inches in diameter.

"Had you succeeded in calling the attention of that vessel," said the Prince, "my launch would have instantly been lowered, a torpedo would have been shot out of her bows,—two if necessary,—and you would have been the means of sending a fine ship, with all her crew, to another world. Now go and bear your fate with fortitude and resignation."

He was striding away, when I called out, "These ladies are half starved, Prince Rozan. You don't wage war on women?"

"Let the women have more food," he said to Coey; and turning his back on us, he disappeared down the companion-ladder.

We were kept there until the torpedo-boat was again hidden under its canvas cover, and then taken back to our respective cabins—or rather, prisons.



CHAPTER XIX

A STARTLING PROPOSAL

SOME two or three days after our object-lesson on the danger of signalling passing vessels, I was amazed to receive an intimation, through one of my jailors, that I was to dine with the Prince. Was our punishment over, I wondered; and were we again to be taken into favour; or was this some deep-laid scheme—some trap? At the same time, mixed with my apprehension was a sense of joy at the idea of seeing Corine once more. Moreover—and may I not be charged with too much grossness and earthliness—I was thankful indeed to have an opportunity of satisfying my hunger, which was keen. Certainly, no pauper in a workhouse could have been worse fed than I, since the attempt to seize the yacht.

My position was certainly an awkward one. My first impulse had been one of indignation that he who had kidnapped us, and treated Rhona and Lady Kilmore with such unnecessary cruelty, should presume to ask me to sit at his table. But again that significant passage respecting the Afghan character flashed across my mind, and I determined to fight



the man with his own weapons. When I entered the Blue Saloon, I found Prince Rozan alone with Corine. He put out his hand and greeted me pleasantly enough, just as if the incidents of the past three weeks had been mere phantasms of my imagination. I was not a little wrathful, but, true to my determination, I summoned up every atom of self-control I possessed, and, I believe, gave no sign which would enable the Prince to read the state of my feelings. Corine merely bowed her head coldly, and then retired to the end of the saloon, apart from us. For an instant I felt hurt. I had expected at least a pressure of the hand. But I was comforted in remembering that she, like us, had a part to play.

The Prince was in his best mood, and while we were awaiting the announcement of dinner, kept up a lively conversation concerning navigation, European affairs, the speed of his yacht, the storms he had encountered, and in fact any commonplace topic rather than the subject which, I suspect, was uppermost in his mind as in mine. Corine said nothing, but kept her head bent over some needle-work — which, I noticed, did not make much progress.

There was no sign of the Kilmores, and when dinner was announced we three sat down alone. I looked in vain for Coey, and it was not until the soup was cleared that, to my intense amazement, I saw him standing at the end of the saloon, occasionally giving orders to the native servants who were waiting upon us. For the moment I forgot my



determination to be as impenetrable as the Prince himself, and sat for more than a few seconds gazing dumbfounded at the Great Financier occupying this almost menial position.

"You evince more surprise than I should have expected in one of Shakespeare's countrymen," said my host, smiling. "You have forgotten that 'A man in his life plays many parts.'"

"I was less surprised," said I, collecting myself, and trying to speak indifferently, "than uncertain whether your new steward was a person I had met at your table on a previous occasion. Life has few real surprises for a barrister, whose occupation gives him many strange glimpses behind the scenes of the human comedy. Men are rarely quite what they seem."

There may have been a touch of satire in the tone of my voice as I uttered these last words, for Corine looked at me apprehensively and frowned slightly. It was the first intimation she had given of an understanding existing between us. I understood her signal. To say anything which would irritate her father was injudicious. He, however, took no offence, and said with a laugh:

"I, too, have played many parts, Mr. Gilbert!—more, perhaps, than you, with all your knowledge of human nature, would suppose. Even you, I take it, are sometimes deceived in a man."

"There is no mistaking," said I, "a man of power and intellect when one meets him. It is the lower grades of humanity who are apt to be deceptive."

It was open to Prince Rozan to take this as a compliment. He did so with evident relish. My friend had his blind side. He was open to flattery, like many a clever and powerful man before him.

"Some races seem born to rule," said he. "I class my own, the Afghan, among them." Some day the hill tribes will rule India."

It was not for me to contradict him. "It is possible," I said.

"One leader whom first the hill tribes and later the people of all India would follow,"—he seemed to be labouring under some excitement,—“money to purchase rifles and machine-guns, such as those with which Europeans mow down their enemies, and India is ours. What could your two hundred thousand soldiers avail against the fighting men, properly armed, of a nation of two hundred and eighty million people?”

"The machine-guns certainly give the English an advantage in warfare with the natives," I admitted honestly enough.

"Warfare you call it!" he cried excitedly. "When you do not let your puny, pale-faced boys come within five hundred yards of their foes, but hide them behind your machines of slaughter, which rain their millions of bullets upon the brave men of the hills—do you call that fair fighting, Mr. Gilbert?"

"We have a proverb," said I, "that all is fair in love and war."

"The proverb of a strong nation which has to deal with weak ones," said the Prince.



Corine gave me another warning glance. The subject was clearly a dangerous one.

"One cannot help feeling some sympathy," said I, "with any people who are fighting for their country against a strong nation. But as to India, I have not been there and really do not understand these questions sufficiently well to discuss them. Some of our philosophic politicians say that we are fitting India to rule herself, and that some day there will be a peaceful revolution."

For a minute or two there was nothing more said, the Prince looking down the table dreamily, with the vacant expression of a man who sees nothing of the present, and is striving hard to peer into the mysteries of the future. At length he broke the silence.

"The days of heroes are past," he said quietly, with a slight sigh. "It is money, not bravery, which wins battles.—What do you want?" He addressed Coey, who stood by his side. A sailor had come to the door of the cabin, and apparently given in some message.

"The lookout reports a strange sail on the star-board bow," said our new steward. "He thinks it a Russian man-o'-war."

"Will you please excuse me?" said the Prince, courteously; and went up the companion-ladder hurriedly, Coey following him.

The dishes were being changed by the native servants. For the moment Corine and I were alone.



"I have been longing to tell you of my gratitude for the letters of warning you sent me," I said, hurriedly.

"Hush!" she said, raising her hand, and speaking quickly in a low voice. "Never mind that now. I do not know what his intentions are, but appear to fall in with his views. It will be safer. I have a plan of escape. I am so glad the wind has gone down"—one of the native servants had entered—"it is so monotonous tossing about on the waves. I shall be very glad to get ashore again."

The Prince returned.

"I have ordered our lights to be put out," he said. "I am not so much in love with the Russians as some of my countrymen. Muscovite friendship is too costly a luxury. It is too much like the friendship of the fox for the goose."

At the close of dinner Corine rose from the table, and left us. The Prince seemed in an exalted mood, talking almost excitedly, recounting to me the grievances of Afghanistan and its people. I could do little else than listen, for which I was glad. He seemed to speak genuinely enough, though I distrusted him. Without committing himself in any way, he hinted slightly that in him I saw the man who would one day be the saviour of his country. He would be the leader in a great Indian revolution. When that leader came, the men who joined with him would have a great reward indeed. They would be worshipped by the people they

had freed, and made rulers and princes. Fabulous wealth and illimitable power would be theirs.

"Come, now," he said at length, "let us join my daughter. She will give us some music."

We went into the ladies' cabin, and at his request Corine sang us charming Venetian barcarolles, dainty French love songs, and a few plaintive Scotch and Irish melodies. I strolled to the piano, and stood hanging over her, enraptured, for her voice was sweet, pure, and sympathetic. But between two of the verses she dismissed me, urging me to keep with her father, and speak to her as little as possible.

At last this strange evening came to an end.

"Good night!" said Prince Rozan, as I took my departure. "It has been a delightful evening; the most pleasant of our cruise. I like you. You are a man of remarkable common-sense and wide knowledge of men and affairs. Before very long I hope you will dine with us again."

An Indian servant, who was waiting outside the door, followed me to my cabin, and to my great vexation I found that I was again to be a prisoner. What had this man meant by releasing me for these few hours? Had he merely felt the want of society, and someone in whom to confide his dreams and aspirations, or had he some dark end in view? How ran that passage?—

The Afghans are apparently frank and affable in manner, especially when they hope to gain some object.

"Frank and affable" had this man been. It was at present beyond my reasoning powers to fathom

his object. I must await the course of events. My path was a thorny one, full of pitfalls, and it behoved me to tread carefully.

For two days I remained in my cabin, living on the same hard fare as before, and then received another summons to dinner.

Again Prince Rozan played the kindly, genial host, studying my every want, pressing dainty dishes upon me, and paying me compliment after compliment. Corine sat silent and reserved, while Coey, standing at the end of the cabin, glowered down upon us.

"Play something soft and sweet," the Prince said to his daughter, when we had entered the music-room. He turned to me,—“Come, sit down here. The Princess will allow us a cigarette.”

He soon waxed confidential: “You were surprised to see Coey acting as steward, but your good breeding prevented you asking any questions. Am I not right?”

I intimated that the matter did not appear to concern me.

“It is courteous indeed of you to take that view of the case,” said the Prince; “but I will, none the less, explain to you how he comes to be in that position—or, rather, how he came to be in the position in which you first made his acquaintance. Coey, I may tell you, is a man of low birth, who committed some petty offence against your English law—married a second time, I think it was, while his first wife was alive. I saved him from punish-



ment and the rogue became my faithful follower. It was merely a matter of spending a few hundreds on witnesses. My possessions were, even at that time, considerable; but I had need of a vast fortune, and it was in England, that wealthy land where money begets money, that it seemed to me I should acquire it. I had been in your country as a youth, and studied its laws and language, its strange customs, and the ways of its people. I knew the greed of the English, their love of gambling and gold, and how clever rascals traded upon their weaknesses and follies. I decided I would come to London, and wring from the English some of the millions which they had wrung from India."

"The Afghans have not allowed the English to wring money from them. Is n't it rather the other way?" I ventured to remark.

"No," he answered; "but the brave hill tribes, formed into a nation under an Afghan Prince, would rule India. The English have levied tribute on a country which should be ours. I obtained the title of a European Prince in Italy," he went on. "I knew the value of even a foreign title in the eyes of your countrymen. But I found that while society would come to my balls, dinners, and splendid entertainments, society had little faith in my financial schemes. For these they seemed to require an Englishman, so I made a study of your English millionaires. Some of them were rough, coarse, unlettered men, coming no one knew whence, but believed in because of their success and wealth. I

saw that I wanted some such a man to act with me, but as any of those I knew would insist on having the lion's share of the profits, I looked round me for some common fellow who could play the part, and decided on Coey. I taught him what little he required to know of financial matters, and guided him carefully in all his commercial operations. There were, among your nobles, men whose extravagance or misfortune placed them in need of money. Coey, under my direction, bought certain of these, and used their names, and his own reputation as a millionaire, to gain the confidence of the English. How he succeeded you know. After two years spent in England, I was one million and a half of your pounds richer than when I entered the country."

"Your scheme," said I, "was magnificent in its conception, and perfect in its execution, but was not Coey's bill for the purchase of Peers just a little—how shall I put it?—extravagant?"

The Prince acknowledged the compliment by a bow.

"A few thousands more or less did not matter much," he said. "We were often dealing with millions. But I now leave England forever. I had not thoroughly mastered your English law, and some of those who worked with me were caught within its meshes. If I could have the aid of an Englishman well versed in the English Statutes, I could secretly, through my agents, double, perhaps treble, that million and a half, and I have decided,



Mr. Gilbert,"—and he looked me in the face,—
"that you are the man I want. You will join us?
Your reward shall be a goodly one. Remember that
the money we make will be put to a good purpose."

I had expected him to ask something of me, but
a request to be Standing Counsel to a man who, for
all I knew to the contrary, might be one of the big-
gest financial rogues the world had ever seen, stag-
gered me.

"You understand," said the Prince, eyeing me
keenly, as if he read my thoughts, "we do not wish
to act contrary to your English law. It is to pre-
vent us acting contrary to it that I ask for your
assistance."

I thought of the torpedo-boat and my unhappy
friends, but discreetly held my peace. It was
evidently desirable to temporise.

"Your offer," said I, "is one of a highly com-
plimentary nature, but it is unexpected and sudden.
I am sure, Prince, you will pardon me if I beg you
to give me time for reflection. It would necessitate
my living out of England, I presume?"

"I shall not go near the country again," said he,
"and my adviser would have to be at hand. Cer-
tainly, take your time." He looked at his watch.
"Ah! it is late. My dear! thank you for your
music; it was very sweet, and Mr. Gilbert and my-
self have greatly enjoyed it."

"I have one difficulty," I said, "in connection
with your offer, Prince Rozan; and that is the un-
fortunate condition in which the Kilmores and Miss



Meynell are placed. If I were satisfied that they would be shortly freed, I should feel increased confidence in your clemency, and certainly be not less favourably disposed towards your project."

A shadow passed over the Prince's face as he pondered for a moment over my remark.

"Within two days they shall leave the yacht; and you will remember, Mr. Gilbert, that it is at your request."

Evidently my reference to the Kilmores had not pleased him, for he spoke sternly.

"I will give you time for reflection," he continued, "and then summon you to give me your answer."



CHAPTER XX

"LET US ESCAPE TOGETHER"

TO become the follower of a fantastic dreamer who, according to his own account, aimed at defrauding my countrymen of millions, with the object of providing funds to overthrow their power in India, was a proposition which, I need hardly say, did not commend itself to me. No doubt the Prince, finding that corruption was more or less rife in high circles, and that most of the men he had dealings with in England had their price, deemed that I too would swallow the bait if it were only made large enough, and sufficiently glittering.

For forty-eight hours longer I was confined to my cabin, and devoted that time to considering possibilities of escape. Though "all is fair in love and war," as I had hinted to this ambitious Afghan, and though treachery and deceit seemed to be part of his character, I felt that for those who deceived him there would be no mercy. If I made him my enemy, I doubted if my life would ever be safe, even in England, where the Prince had, owing to his boundless wealth, unscrupulous agents who would stick at nothing to carry out his orders.



Then there was Corine. What would become of her, I wondered, if I left the yacht? Surely, never was man placed in position of greater doubt and difficulty than I.

The yacht no longer cruised aimlessly about in the Arctic Ocean. On the morning after the Prince made his startling proposals, on looking at my compass I found that we were steering nearly due south. From the swift surging of the water by the port-hole, I had no doubt that we were travelling at a high rate of speed. No incident of importance occurred. Night fell—a long, weary, wakeful night, and I was truly thankful when the light of early morning came glimmering through the port-hole. About noon on the second day it became evident that something unusual was taking place. Persons passed to and fro down the passage outside my cabin. There was a murmur of voices, and for the first time since our attempt to seize the *Lorelei* I heard the barking of Lady Kilmore's dogs on deck. A few minutes later the yacht seemed to lose way and my cabin was suddenly darkened. Running to the port-hole, I saw that a boat was passing close to it; but I was unable to distinguish its occupants, as the yacht was beginning to heel over again. For some time nothing further transpired, and I was lying on my cot anxiously wondering what had taken place, when the door was flung open, and the Prince himself entered.

"I have come for your decision, Mr. Gilbert," he said. "I have kept my word, and sent your friends ashore."



While I was thankful that the Kilmores and Rhona were at last out of this man's clutches, a feeling of loneliness and dread came upon me when I realised that my friends had involuntarily deserted me, and that I was more than ever at the mercy of this dangerous man. Corine had held out hopes of escape. If only I could delay giving him my decision, it would be something gained.

“ I hardly expected you would put the question so soon,” said I. “ There are many things to be considered.”

“ Remember,” said the Prince, “ I offer you wealth far greater than ever you would obtain in England, with all the pleasures that wealth can give.”

“ I do not seem able to think,” I said, “ cooped up in this cabin. May I not have my liberty ? ”

To my surprise, he answered : “ Most certainly. So long as you do not hold conversation with any of the crew, you can go where you please. You will give me your word as to that ? ”

“ Yes,” I said.

“ I can give you two days longer in which to decide,” he continued, “ but no more, for then I commence a voyage to a spot which no man must see who is not one of us, body and soul. You will, I hope, dine with us as usual to-night ? ”

I thanked him, and he withdrew.

I did not go on deck for half an hour, as I thought it best to show no undue eagerness. But then how glorious it was, after those weeks of captivity, to

feel once more the soft west wind blowing in my face; to see the gallant yacht under full sail, descending into the valleys of water, then climbing the brow of some great crested wave; to taste on my lips the sea salt, and to draw in great draughts of pure fresh air! I was weak, perhaps emotional, and for some minutes I stood clinging to the shrouds, with my knees shaking beneath me. When I recovered myself I began to look around for that land to which the Prince had despatched the Kilmores. None was in sight, but I noticed that one of the ship's boats was missing from its davits. Coey came down the deck at that moment.

"When do you expect the boat back?" I said, stopping him.

"Which boat?" he asked, with evident surprise.

"Why, the one you sent my friends ashore in," I said.

"Sent them ashore?" And he laughed.

"They are hardly there yet."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you would want a precious quick boat to do a hundred miles in an hour and a half," and again he laughed.

"A hundred miles!"

"That's about it."

I could not understand him. "But are they to do a hundred miles in the ship's boat?" I asked.

"You'll never pick up the boat again."

"If they don't do it in the ship's boat," said Coey, "they won't do it at all, unless they're re-



markable swimmers; and as for the boat, they 're welcome to it."

" But what 's to become of the men who went with them ? " I asked.

" You don't suppose, Mr. Gilbert, that we could spare any of our crew ? Bless me ! I thought you were sharper than that."

" Oh, I see," said I, faintly ; for now the truth began to dawn upon me. " You have put them in a boat, and left them to get to land as best they can ? "

" You 've hit the right nail on the head this time," he said, with a coarse laugh.

" Have they got sails, oars, and provisions ? " I asked anxiously.

" Yes, she was victualled for about three days. It is more than they deserved," said he. " Do you see that ?"—and he pointed to his right ear, part of which was missing. " That blackguard friend of yours took that off ; a man in whose pockets I have put thousands. That 's gratitude for you."

An angry reply was on the tip of my tongue, but I checked myself. My own safety depended largely on a seeming friendliness with this man and his master.

" I am quite sure," I said, " that Sir Patrick Kilmore had no intention of shooting you. The pistol went off by accident in the struggle. It was a foolish affair."

" Oh, you think it was an accident ? " said he, somewhat doubtfully.

" I am certain of it."

" It seems to me," said he, " I am being treated pretty badly all round. I did n't think, after having served the Prince so well in London, that he would have played me the low-down trick of turning me into a steward while you were on board. He might at least have let me play the game out."

" It was hard on you," I said, with some show of sympathy. " Particularly after associating with men like Rothschild."

" I should think it was, though I never knew Rothschild. That was all bluff," he grumbled. " But there 's one thing I 'm thankful for: I did n't have to wait on those damned Kilmores."

" What land are they likely to make ?" I said, carelessly.

" Well," said Coey, " the Prince gave them a compass, and told them to steer south-west, which might take them to Iceland; but if they miss it, goodness only knows where they 'll get to—South America, I suppose, if they went on far enough. But they have n't got enough food to last out such a journey as that."

" How did they go off ?" I asked. " How did the ladies bear it ?"

" Oh, the Kilmore woman was happy enough so long as she had her yelping dogs with her; and I don't think the red-haired one cared much what became of her so long as the parson was hanging round her skirts."

" Where are we bound for ?" I asked.



" You 'd better ask the Prince that," said Coey, shortly, and turning on his heel, he left me.

At dinner, Prince Rozan evidently laid himself out to charm me with a description of the life he had been leading—a life which would be mine to lead if I joined him, so he hinted. He knew I was fond of shooting and fishing, and gave me a series of brilliant descriptions of tiger-hunting, mahseer-fishing, and fights with great tarpon, an immense herring which is caught off the coast of Florida; of red-deer stalking in Northern Scandinavia, and lion-hunting in Africa. All these he appeared to have done. From such subjects he passed to the gaieties of Paris, Vienna, and London, and then dwelt on the delights of cruising among the lovely South Sea Islands. Of his wild dream of conquering India he said nothing. His life had been, and would be, those listening to him would think, one long round of perpetual pleasure. He knew I loved music, and after dinner he asked Corine to sing, and begged me stand by her and help with the music. Would I not try a duet with her? He was sure I had a good voice.

As a matter of fact, I had a passable baritone, and finding a song or two which I knew, we tried them over together.

While Corine was singing a few bars by herself, I chanced to look round, and saw that the Prince had left us. I bent down and whispered softly, " He is gone."

She ceased her song, but continued playing.

"I expected it," she said. "I knew it was his intention to leave us together. He has ordered me to try and induce you to enter into a compact with him. I have warned you thrice. Let me warn you again. Have nothing to do with him. Escape, if you can, from this vessel."

"But how?" I said. "It seems impossible."

"I have been preparing for it for days and days," she answered. "You know my father rarely allows any of the crew to be on deck, and I have been placing provisions, whenever I could obtain any, in the large dingey. There are water-barrels, kept filled, in all the boats, and a few cases of biscuits."

"Is there a mast and sail?" I asked.

"No," she said. "Would they be necessary?"

I told her I thought they would simply be invaluable, and without them it would be difficult for one man alone to travel any great distance in a boat of that size.

"Alone?" she said, and looked at me curiously.

"Shall I ever see you again, do you think?" I asked her.

She did not answer, but played on, and I saw tears stealing down her cheeks.

"This life is as hateful to me as it is to you," she said presently.

"And would you leave it?" I asked.

"Oh, yes!—a thousand times yes!" she answered, very earnestly.

Would she be willing to escape with me? I wondered. Should I be right in even hinting at such



a thing, and rendering her liable to all the suffering and privation which a long and dangerous journey in an open boat might entail? It seemed almost a duty to take her out of the hands of such a miscreant as her father appeared to be—if, indeed, he was her father, which I sometimes doubted. But the risk was so great, so very great. The Prince might return at any minute. It was necessary for me to come to an immediate decision. “ Yes,” I thought, “ I will tell her of the dangers I myself shall run, then she shall decide.”

“ Even if I get safely away from the yacht,” I said, “ it may be days before I reach land. Storms may blow me miles out of my course, and I may perhaps be tossed about for days in the Atlantic or the North Sea. Even when I get within sight of land, there is no certainty of safety. The boat may be smashed to pieces, and myself drowned, on some rock-bound shore.”

“ It is the great waves that I should fear,” she said.

“ Princess,” I said, earnestly, “ have you for one moment thought of escaping with me ? ”

“ I have no greater wish in life,” she said, “ than to leave this man. He shows no fatherly affection for me, and was a stranger to me until a year or two ago. If,” and she faltered, “ if you will take me, I will go with you.”

How my heart leaped at her words! A declaration of my love for her was hanging on my lips, but I dared not give way to feelings of that kind at such

a time; it seemed too much like taking advantage of her defenceless position. There had never been one word of love between us, but in my heart I never doubted that she loved me. Over and over again she had warned me of the dangers by which I was surrounded, and now she would imperil her life rather than be separated from me. "Perhaps," I thought, "I am presumptuous to put this explanation on her conduct. Perhaps, after all, her desire to escape is only caused by her dread of being involved in her father's criminal schemes." She was willing, however, to place her life and her honour in my hands. It was a trust in me so great and so unbounded that I determined, please God! she should never regret it.

"Then let us escape together," I said, "if we can. But it should be soon—to-night or to-morrow if possible, for I now have some faint idea of our whereabouts, and to-morrow night the Prince will call upon me to give my decision. We should be off the yacht before then. Is it possible, do you think, to lower the boat, and get away unobserved?"

"Oh, easily!—easily!" she answered quickly, looking round to see if we were still alone. "When we were at Venice I often lowered the boat, the machinery works so easily, and went about the lagoons all by myself. I am afraid the electricity will not take us very far in that small boat; not more than twenty or thirty miles."

"Then we must have a mast and sail," I said. "Shall we make the attempt to-night? There will



be no moon visible, which is fortunate, but if the boat is hanging on the windward side of the yacht, and there is much wind, we shall never be able to launch her.”

“ Oh, how shall I know ? How can we signal one another ? ” cried Corine. “ And I shall never be able to get out of my cabin, for I have to pass the Prince’s door, and outside it there always sleeps one of the native servants.”

“ Could you not make some excuse to go on deck ? ” I asked.

“ Yes,” she answered, “ but if my father is awake, and hears voices outside, he is certain to come out of his cabin. Oh ! what— Shall we try the song over again ? ”

The Prince had entered the saloon.

“ Still singing ? ” he said. “ Don’t tire Mr. Gilbert with too much music, Corine.” He turned to me,—“ You would like a cigar before going to bed ? ”

“ If you have no objection,” said I, “ I would rather smoke on deck.”

“ I much prefer it,” he answered ; and we went up the companion-ladder together.



CHAPTER XXI

FOR FREEDOM

As we slowly paced up and down the deck I carefully noticed the position of the boats, of which the *Lorelei*, when we left Southampton, carried four—a pinnace, a lifeboat, and two dingies. On the star-board side of the vessel hung the lifeboat and the small dingie. Since my unfortunate friends were sent adrift the only boat left on the port side was the larger of the two dingies, the one in which I hoped to escape. In bad weather all the boats were swung inboard, and secured with ropes; but in anything less than half a gale it was the Prince's custom to always have one, at least, of the dingies swung outwards. It could thus be lowered at a moment's notice if any of the crew fell overboard or other accident occurred necessitating the speedy launching of a boat.

Those who have been on vessels of any size must have noticed that the ship's boats are hung by means of ropes and blocks (pulleys) from the end of two curved iron rods which rise out of the bulwarks. These iron rods, called davits, twist in their sockets. When turned outwards the boat they support hangs



over the water, while if it is desirable to bring the boat over the deck of the ship, it is hauled into that position, the davits twisting inwards. These few words of explanation are necessary to the understanding of several incidents which occurred during that eventful night.

I was not a little thankful to find that owing to the fair weather we were experiencing the larger dingey, and, indeed, all the boats, were swung outwards. This was not uncommon in fair weather, as it gave more room on deck. To lower a boat, I had only to touch a lever which controlled the electric motor. There would, so far as I could see, be no difficulty in our escaping, provided the night was dark, no one was on deck, and Corine and I could get into the boat unseen and unheard. Food and water, so Corine had said, were in the dingey, but I feared lest she had underestimated the quantity we should require on a long sea-voyage. The fact that there was no means of sailing the dingey greatly troubled me. If we encountered bad weather, it would be impossible for me, with a pair of oars, to make headway against the wind. The lifeboat, I knew, was provided with a couple of large lug-sails, and if I could only secure one of these, I had no doubt that I should be able, in some way, to rig up the mast and make sail.

As we sauntered up and down under the stars, Prince Rozan little thought of the new plot that was a-hatching. That night he talked chiefly of financial matters, questioning me minutely concerning

the legality of certain practices which were rife in the City. Was it legal, he asked, to buy a mine for a few hundreds, and sell it for many thousands to a company? And I was forced to confess that it was, so long as no untrue and fraudulent statements were made in the prospectus.

"Then you are not bound to let the shareholders know how little the property originally cost?"

"No, certainly not," I said.

Was it legal, he asked, for the promoter of the company to make presents of shares to persons, to induce them to become Directors?—Was it legal to appoint men as Directors who had no knowledge of the business, but merely a title of nobility which gave the public confidence in the company?—Was it legal to go on with the company when the public had bought very few shares, and there was insufficient money to work the business?—Was it legal to mortgage the property of the company to Directors, and certain favoured shareholders, by allotting them debentures, so that the other creditors of the company, when it was wound up, got nothing? These, and many similar questions, he put to me, and all I could answer was that, so far as I was aware, subject to certain reservations, such practices were legal in England.

"Though I know that these things are constantly being done," said he, "and have made hundreds of thousands by such means myself, still I must say your answer surprises me. I always thought we were sailing—what is your English term?—sailing



very close to the wind, and that these practices were not unattended with risk. But I think I can understand how it is. So many of the men who make your laws are Directors of these companies, that they do not care to make any law which might injure themselves."

I am afraid I did not pay very much attention to the Prince's remarks at the time, my mind was so occupied with my own personal concerns. It did not follow, because I had a rogue at my elbow, that all City men were swindlers. Having satisfied his curiosity on these various legal questions, he began talking to me of Afghanistan, telling me how, for two hundred years, Afghan kings ruled Bengal; and how, when the Sikhs and Afghans were for once allies, they defeated the English at Chilianwala, slaying two thousand four hundred of our officers and men; and how, in the first Afghan war, some few years earlier, of four thousand soldiers and twelve thousand camp-followers who had to retire through snowy passes from Afghanistan, only one man reached Jalalabad. But he did not tell me, and I was careful not to remind him, that a year later an English army entered Cabul.

"Mighty fighters are we men of the hills," said he. "Worthy descendants of King Saul. And there will come a time, I tell you, when a greater than Saul shall arise; greater even than Akbar. One who will join under one banner all the hill tribes, who now foolishly contend one against the other. But I am wearying you. I daresay you

would like to retire to your cabin. I have to give some orders to the lookout."

He bade me good night, walked forward to the little conning-place near the forecastle, and gave me an opportunity of overcoming one of my greatest difficulties—to get communication with Corine. Rushing below, I knocked at her cabin door and called her by name. She opened it instantly.

"The Prince is on deck," I said. "The moment he comes down below and enters his cabin, leave yours. Take everything you want, go on deck, and if there are no men about, climb into the dingey and hide there. If you have time put on a dark dress, dark gloves, and cover your face with a shawl. As soon as I think it is safe I will join you."

I did not wait even to hear her answer; Rozan might come below at any moment. Going swiftly to my cabin, I packed up the few things which were most important—my compass, oilskins, woollen sweater, and a few simple medicines. My pocket-book containing bank-notes I put in a waterproof sponge-bag, and slung it round my neck under my clothes. Heaven only knew where we might be cast, and money would surely be needed. I was glad to find my little stock of wax vestas had not quite run out; one box remained, which I put in the waterproof bag with the pocketbook.

I had hardly completed the few preparations which were possible, before I heard the soldier-like tread of Prince Rozan, who was making his way to his cabin. As soon as he had passed, I opened my



cabin door a few inches and stood there anxiously awaiting Corine. She told me afterwards that she left her cabin almost immediately the Prince entered his; but the few seconds which elapsed seemed an eternity. As she came by on tiptoe I stopped her.

"You may have to hide in the boat an hour or even more," I whispered. "I must not venture on deck until later, when I hope the Prince will be asleep."

I waited a full hour. Coey passed down the passage to the Prince's cabin, entered, stayed with him for a few minutes, and then came out again. A little later the native servant took his place at the Prince's door. Fortunately, I had not to pass the native on my way to the companion-ladder, and when the time at last came—when all seemed quiet—I was able to get on deck unobserved.

Not knowing who might be about, I crawled to the bulwarks on hands and knees, and crouching in their shadow, gradually and noiselessly reached the davits of the dingey in which I hoped to find Corine hiding. I could neither see nor hear any of the crew. It did not take me a moment to climb on to the rail and holding the davit with one hand, for the vessel was rolling in the heavy swell, swing my bundle of things in with the other. Corine was there awaiting me, but did not speak. I whispered that I had other things to fetch, and then stealthily crossed the deck, and robbed the big lifeboat of a mast and small sail. In doing this it was almost impossible to avoid making a slight noise, and I

must have been overheard, for just as I had deposited my burden in the dingey, and was on deck again, about to move the lever, I saw a dark figure coming towards me. Should I attempt to hide myself, or simply pretend to be pacing the deck, enjoying the starry night? I decided on the latter course, and found myself face to face with Blagg.

"Oh, I thought you had turned in, sir," he said, touching his cap.

I read suspicion in his voice.

"Yes, I did go below," I said, "but could not sleep, so came to spend half an hour on deck. It's a lovely night, but the swell is very heavy, considering how little wind there is."

"Daresay it's been blowing hard somewhere out in the Atlantic," said the sailor. "If there ain't a storm in one place, there's a storm in another. You can pretty nigh allus reckon on a storm somewhere, and we're bound to feel 'em out here in the open."

We were not very far from Prince Rozan's cabin, and fearing the sound of our voices might reach him, I walked forward, Blagg following just behind me. Why did not the man go? What business was it of his if I chose to spend the night on deck?

"Is it your watch?" I asked.

"Well, no, not exactly," he said; "but there! we all does a bit of watching at times, you know, and the Prince likes us to be on the lookout for whatever may turn up. Queer things happen out



at sea sometimes. Suppose now, you, sir, was to jump into one of those boats and go off. The Prince would n't like that."

"A pretty bad lookout for me," I said, trying to laugh, "in a small boat in the middle of this great ocean, and without provisions."

"Yes, it would be a bad lookout," said Blagg, significantly, "particularly when we turned the search-light on, and half-a-dozen of us was a-potting at you with rifles."

"I had no idea you carried a search-light," I said. "We have n't used it."

"Have n't wanted to use it," said the sailor, gruffly. "Have n't had anything to search for. As for carrying search-lights, why, this bloomin' vessel carries pretty nigh everything a vessel could carry in that way, and a lot more."

I strolled down the other side of the deck. Still the man followed me. There was no ridding myself of him. And all this time Corine was lying in the boat, waiting for me to join her. It was exasperating, when everything had gone so well, to be foiled at the last moment, and by the very man who had betrayed our scheme of seizing the yacht. How could I get rid of him? I racked my brains for some plan. Should I fall upon him and strangle him, or toss him overboard? We were evenly matched as to size, but owing to my long confinement and prison fare, I felt that my strength was not equal to his. If I could only send him below, or in any way be free of him for even five minutes,

I might be able to jump into the boat, and be away with Corine before he returned.

At last an idea came to me. The levers which worked the lowering and raising apparatus of the boats were fixed level with the deck, and close under the bulwarks. As I walked with Blagg down the starboard or right side of the vessel (Corine, it should be borne in mind, being in the dingey on the opposite side), I kept as near as I could to the rail. On coming to the lever belonging to the lifeboat, I kicked it over and fell to the deck as if I had caught my foot in something.

"Oh! I have sprained my ankle!" I groaned out. "Give us a hand, there 's a good fellow."

I bore as heavily as I could on the sailor as he helped me up and led me towards the foremast. I sat down on the cabin skylight.

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed, "the lifeboat 's gone." For by this time it had disappeared below the bulwarks. "How could it have happened?"

Blagg uttered an oath and rushed to the side, and I limped after him. The big boat was in the water; and fortune favoured me immensely, for the tackle by which it ordinarily hung from the davits had become unhitched at the stern. Before the boat could be hauled up into its old position, this rope would have to be hooked on to it again. To do this, it was necessary for someone to climb down the remaining rope into the boat.

"You 'll have to get into her," I said to Blagg. "I 'm afraid I cannot help you, my ankle 's too

bad. But when you have made everything snug I'll work the lever for you, and get you up again."

I was surprised he did not call for assistance, but I rather suspect he feared being blamed for the accident, and believing that he could work the apparatus with my assistance, preferred to do so rather than call for help.

It did not take him long to clamber down into the boat. He had first to find the boat-hook, then catch the ropes which were trailing in the water, and readjust them to the stern of the boat. This was my opportunity. Before he could secure the ropes I pushed the lever over; the motor began to work, and the bow only of the lifeboat began to rise in the air, the stern resting on the water. What happened to her afterwards I do not know. I hoped she would fill, and all her gear be carried away.

Blagg, who was in a perilous position, shouted lustily. Without waiting to see the result of my action, I rushed down the deck to the davits from which hung the small dingey, squatted down on deck, placed my heels against the bulwarks, and taking the lever in both hands, pulled it towards me with my utmost strength, and succeeded in breaking it off. Having made the lowering of that boat a matter of no little difficulty, I crossed to the other side of the vessel, where Corine was still awaiting me in the large dingey. Even as I went I saw dark forms scrambling on deck through the fore-hatchway; but the attention of the crew was entirely given to the lifeboat, and all

that happened on the port side of the vessel passed unnoticed.

There was no time for delay. I hurriedly pushed over the lever, jumped on the rail, and clambered in as the boat was descending. Once she was in the water, it did not take a moment to free her from the ropes by which she had swung from the davits. While this was doing Corine started the motor, the little craft began to forge through the water, and behold! we had escaped from the *Lorelei*.



CHAPTER XXII

THE SEARCH-LIGHT

EVIDENTLY the first thing to be done was to put between us and the yacht the greatest possible distance in the shortest possible space of time. The *Lorelei* was being sailed nearly due south, and I at first steered the electric dingey in exactly the opposite direction. I suppose our little craft was doing her four or five knots, while the yacht, owing to the light wind, was travelling perhaps at the same rate, or a little less. Thus, with these speeds and journeying in opposite directions, it followed that in an hour we should be from eight to ten miles distant from one another. I calculated on a start of about fifteen minutes. For at least ten minutes the crew would surely be busied righting the lifeboat, and then, if they discovered our flight immediately afterwards, it would take not less than another five minutes—much longer, I hoped—to get the search-light fixed and in working order, for no such apparatus was visible above decks during our cruise.

Though I did not look at my watch, I have no doubt we had the fifteen minutes' grace, and more; for the yacht had been out of sight some time when,

suddenly, a brilliant beam of light came flashing out over the sea. Corine and I had hardly spoken up to then, all of our attention having been given to the launch. I had pressed her hand and whispered "Courage," for she was very cold, and trembling — that was all. But when this great stripe of white light came beating over the heaving waters, she almost shrieked out. I judged the yacht then to be quite two miles away. At such a distance the dingey, which was only eighteen feet long, would appear a mere speck, and I hoped we should pass unobserved. The heavy swell which was rolling southward was all in our favour, for as we sank in the trough of the sea, we were completely hidden from those on the yacht by the wall of water on each side of us. Unless they could bring both their light and telescope to bear at the instant we topped a wave, they were not likely to discover us.

I was not a little delighted to find that for the first five minutes or so the search-light was kept at work to the southward and eastward, Prince Rozan no doubt expecting that I should make either for Scotland or the mainland of Europe. But presently the triangle of light came sweeping toward us. As it neared our boat we crouched down, and Corine clutched my arm. But it passed on right round to the westward, and we breathed again. Hither and thither they searched the face of the waters with this great beam of light, but onward we went unseen, ever increasing the distance between us and the *Lorelei*. We were just congratulating ourselves



that we were safe from pursuit, when the light came working back toward us, and as bad luck would have it, at that instant we rose on the top of the swell, and must have been fully exposed to view. Everything in our boat was lit up, and I could plainly see Corine's pale, anxious face.

"Oh! they must have seen us! They must have seen us!" she cried out. "See, the light does not pass on! They are keeping it upon us."

Still I held on my course, hoping we might be mistaken; but that beam of light never left us.

"The red light is showing! and now the green one! What does it mean?" she exclaimed.

"It means," I said, "that they have put down their helm, and turned the *Lorelei's* head this way. So long as we can see both her lights she will be coming in a direct line after us."

"Hark! Did you hear that?" cried Corine.

It was the sound of a rifle report, very faint, for the distance was great, and the slight wind that was blowing carried the sound away from us. I heard several other shots fired, but no bullets ever came near, for we were by this time quite out of any ordinary range.

"Do you think they can catch us?" whispered Corine. "Oh, if we could only make our boat go faster!"

The question was one I had been asking myself again and again. The *Lorelei* had no great speed when worked solely by her electric motor, which was merely a slight auxiliary power to take her out

of land-locked waters, or to propel her at any time when there was no wind. Still, it seemed to me, from what I knew of her, that she could do much about the same speed as our dingey; and while the small stock of electricity we had stored in our accumulators would soon be exhausted, the Prince had means on his yacht of generating fresh supplies as he required them, and so could run us down eventually, provided he could keep us in sight. If there had only been land near us— island, rocks, anything—we could have run our boat into shallow water where the yacht could not follow. But out here, on the open sea, there was no cover, no protection, except that afforded us by the ever rising and falling water. The lifeboat was the craft I most feared, for it was faster than the dingey, and could in time overtake us. But I ventured to hope that the trick played on Blagg had resulted in the machinery of that boat being disarranged and rendered useless for the time being. If the wind had been in any other direction the *Lorelei* could have sailed down to us in no time, but, as I have said, it was a north wind, blowing from us to her, and I expect stopped her more than it did the little craft to which we had committed ourselves.

“ Why not steer out of the light ? ” said Corine. “ Perhaps they may not be able to see us.”

To do this was our only chance of escape, so putting up the helm, I turned the nose of the boat to the east, and ran at right angles to our former course. This, unfortunately, meant diminishing the



distance between us and the *Lorelei*, but if they once lost sight of us it was quite possible they might not pick us up again. Even in daylight it would have been no easy matter to see our boat at such a distance in this heavy swell.

For five minutes or so I kept on our eastward course, the search-light following us the whole time, pinning us down, as it were, to the water. It was a trying and terrible position, for I knew I should have no mercy shown me if the vindictive Afghan had me once again in his clutches. Then there was Corine, too. What might not happen to her?

On we went, and still the light followed us.

"Steer the other way now," said Corine.

I did as she suggested, trying to dodge that cruel, cold blue beam; and suddenly—Heaven be thanked!—the boat darkened. They had missed us! The search-light began to turn hither and thither in vain attempt to find us. Again and again it swept over us, but without those on board, who were no doubt looking through telescopes, catching us on the field of their glasses. I now ventured to hope that before our electricity was all expended, we should be absolutely out of sight of Prince Rozan and his crew. We could now only see the green light of the vessel, which signified that she was no longer heading toward us, but continuing her course northward. Smaller and smaller dwindled that twinkling green lamp, until it altogether disappeared, and gradually even the brilliant search-light, high up on the yacht's masts, became dim and indistinct.

"The green light has gone out," said Corine. "I can't understand it. What does it mean?"

"That is good news," I told her. "It means that the yacht is going away from us. They have completely lost us."

We had no light on board by which I could see the compass, but I had been able to steer by the stars, for the night was cloudless. As we went, steadily ploughing our way through the heaving sea, I began to lay my plans. So long as the electricity lasted out it seemed to me best to take no heed of our ultimate destination, but to simply steer right away from the yacht. When our little motor became useless, then I would make sail, and go—whither?

There were several courses open to me. To the eastward lay Norway, some six hundred miles distant; for I judged, from what Coey had said, that we were now not many miles from Iceland. I would, indeed, have made for that island, but I did not know its direction with sufficient accuracy, and if I missed it, we might be hopelessly lost. To the south or south-west undoubtedly lay Scotland and England, to reach which we should have to pass over some five hundred miles or more of water. How long would our food and water hold out? That was one important factor in the situation. I had to wait until daylight came before I could take stock of our food; but long before then I had rigged up the oilskin hood over the bows of the dingey, which was used as a protection to the passengers in bad weather,

and had persuaded Corine to lie down under it and rest, for a heavy dew was falling. I was thankful, indeed, for my oilers that night. It was bitterly cold, and the tiller and all else on board were wet and clammy.

I had sat there perhaps an hour, when Corine crept out from under the hood.

"I can't sleep," she said. "You must want rest. Do let me take the tiller."

She would not be persuaded to lie down again, but sat by me, talking, until the sun rose over our port bow. Slowly the edge of a great orange disc showed above the sea, streaks of red appeared in the sky, and presently the glorious radiance of the sun dispersed the mists of night, and warmed us—two poor shivering mortals out in an open boat on the wild Arctic sea.

"I am afraid there's no fragrant coffee, or hot rolls, or anything nice for breakfast," said Corine. "I never thought we should want to cook anything. But I've been stealing tinned things without number, and putting them in the stern locker. Was n't it a wonder no one found them out?"

Out in the open sea none of the boats had been wanted, or no doubt Corine's little store of provisions would have been discovered.

"Whatever it is," said I, "it will be the best breakfast I ever had in my life, if you will only get it ready."

And very soon we were facing one another, trying to eat a tinned chicken with a pocket-knife, with

cracknel biscuits instead of bread, and draughts of unpleasantly flavoured water out of the wooden barrel in lieu of the delicious coffee made by the *chef* of the *Lorelei*.

I had been searching in every direction for the yacht, but she was nowhere in sight, nor on the whole long line of the horizon was any vessel visible.

"Now," said I, when we had finished our modest repast, "let us go to our store-cupboard and take stock of our provisions. We may be a week at sea."

"A week!" cried Corine, looking very blank. "Why, I thought at the most we should be able to reach land in a day."

"Well, much depends on the wind," I said. "If we get a good breeze in the right direction we shall get there very quickly." And the thought flashed across my mind as I spoke, that if that breeze was to arise to a gale, we might never reach land at all, for our boat was a mere cockle-shell, and not built for sailing. Still, the hood was a great protection, and I hoped by its means to ride out any bad weather we were likely to encounter at that time of year. Just then the sea, though the swell continued, was glassy smooth, not a zephyr ruffling its sun-kissed surface.

I overhauled our provisions. We had two barrels of water—in all, I should say, about ten gallons; so we were not likely to suffer from thirst for some time. In one of the side lockers, lined with tin, were about fifteen pounds of ship-biscuits, stale, but not unprofitable. Little did that master of detail,



Prince Rozan, think, when he gave the order for them to be constantly kept on board the dingey in case of accident, that he was thereby providing for a runaway daughter and an escaping prisoner. Corine's little store consisted of fourteen tins of various kinds of preserved meat, and in addition, some similar items which came rather under the head of tasty delicacies than food. I calculated that we had water for a month or more, but provisions for not much over a week. Clearly, it behoved us to be sparing. If Scotland was, as I imagined, some five hundred and fifty miles distant, and we could manage an average speed of three miles an hour, or seventy-two miles in the twenty-four, we ought to be at least within sight of land in eight days. Everything depended on the wind, which at that moment was absolutely wanting.

I made my decision without further hesitation, turned the dingey's head due south, and prayed devoutly that before long we might fall in with a passing vessel.

The next thing to be done, was to fit out our little craft with a mast and sail, a matter of no small difficulty, for with the exception of a long painter we had no ropes on board, and there were no proper fittings for holding the mast. Giving Corine the tiller, and placing my compass on the seat by her, I commenced work by removing the painter and unravelling it, which gave me several not very substantial ropes, each about twelve feet in length. I fortunately had a strong clasp-knife, and with this

I attacked the foremost thwart, or seat, and gradually cut into it a semicircular hole of a size to fit one side of the mast. The bottom of the dingey was covered with open woodwork, and it did not take me very long to make a sufficiently large hole, in which I placed the mast, lashing it firmly to the thwart. By the time I had done this and fixed up a little standing rigging it was nearing six o'clock, and Corine called my attention to the fact that the dingey was going very slowly. Evidently our stock of electricity was nearly exhausted.

At first I decided to stop the motor and husband what little power was left, but knowing that there was often a slight leakage, and that when we came to draw upon our electric bank we might find no balance, I feared this might be no advantage. On the other hand, every yard we pushed forward now was something gained. So we held on our course for another half-hour, going, indeed, very slowly, until at last the propeller stopped its revolutions, the little boat gradually lost way, and we came to a standstill. There was still no wind, so I took off my coat, and with Corine to steer me, I did a good two hours' solid work with the oars, not making much progress, perhaps, but still gaining something. Had I been alone, doubtless I should have sat down and waited for the wind, but I determined that I would spare no effort to bring the dear girl who had trusted her life into my keeping safely to land.

The dingey, though not of great size, was terribly heavy, owing to the weight of the accumulators



which held the electricity, and like a fool I never thought of throwing any of these overboard, for they were now perfectly useless, except as ballast.

About ten o'clock I found I could row no more, and was so exhausted that I had to take an hour's rest under the hood. When I awoke I saw that the sun was no longer shining. Clouds were banking up to the eastward, and a breeze was already beginning to ripple the surface of the water. It did not take long to hoist the lug-sail, and soon, with a fair breeze on our beam, we were reaching along at three or four knots an hour. The dingey sailed better than I expected from her build, but she was so heavily laden that, on the wind increasing, she began to labour heavily, and kept taking in water notwithstanding the hood in the bows. Fortunately, the boat was fitted with a small pump, which Corine worked from time to time while I steered.

Darker and darker grew those clouds on the eastern horizon, and higher rose the wind. Very soon I was forced to fold down the hood, which had been some slight protection, and take two reefs in our small lug-sail. This I did very reluctantly, as I was most anxious to press on, but the seas were now flying over us, and the position was a most unpleasant one. Not till then did it occur to me to get rid of some of those useless accumulators which were weighing us down. I had to trust Corine to steer while I tossed them overboard one by one, only leaving three amidships to serve as ballast. It was wonderful, the difference this lightening of our little ship



made, for we sailed on gaily for a couple of hours, taking no greater amount of sea than an occasional sprinkling of spray. All day long we held on our course, though here and there the waves were breaking slightly; but towards nightfall the wind had increased to such a pitch, and the sea was so high, that I was afraid to sail the dingey in the dark.

I now found myself faced with another difficulty. If I took down my sail and let the boat drift all night, we should be carried many miles to the westward, far out of our course; and if the wind blew from this direction for several days we might not make Scotland at all, but ultimately find ourselves right out in the Atlantic. Suddenly I remembered the apparatus used by Prince Rozan under similar circumstances.

"Oh, if we only had the *Lorelei's* floating anchor!" I said, aloud.

"Can't you make one out of the sail?" suggested Corine.

I thought the matter well out, and came to the conclusion that this was impossible. The next best, and indeed the only, thing I could do was to take all the floor-boards of the boat, two of the oars, and the mast, and lash them securely together, making a kind of raft. I then joined all the ropes I could find together, made one end fast to the raft and the other to the bows of our dingey, and threw the raft overboard. This cumbrous contrivance, which was more or less sunk in the water, was affected but little by the wind, and to it we lay moored all night,



drifting, I hoped, not more than three or four miles. To shelter Corine I readjusted the hood, though in her best interest I was doubtful about doing this, as it caught the wind and must have increased our drift. However, the poor girl had an arduous time before her, so I came to the conclusion that it was best to give her all the rest and shelter possible and save her strength. With the sail stretched across the mouth of the hood, and made fast to one of the seats of the boat, she had quite a cosy little cabin.

I had left a small piece of flooring in the stern of the boat, and on this I coiled myself up in my oil-skins, pulled my sou'wester well over my face, put my trust in Providence, and very soon slept.



CHAPTER XXIII

THE PHANTOM PINNACE

To travel five hundred miles in a small open boat, over an immense ocean, doubtless seems a very terrible undertaking. None the less, if well provisioned, and one is favoured by fair winds and encounters ordinary summer weather, there is no more reason why a well-found eighteen-foot boat should not journey five hundred miles than five. As I have said, if we could only average our three miles an hour, doing seventy-two miles a day, we should complete the journey in a little over a week.

But we were not fated to have fair winds, and sometimes we had no wind at all. The very first night in our open craft we were delayed, it may be remembered, by having to lie moored to a rough raft used as a floating anchor. I very soon found, indeed, that our little cruise was likely to be still further prolonged considerably.

On the second day, however, all went well enough. The gale had abated, the wind was steady, and we sailed along right merrily, topping wave after wave, and reaching across the Arctic Ocean into the North Sea.

It was obviously impossible for me to sail the boat both night and day, so Corine and I took alternate turns at the tiller. From four o'clock until eight I tried to sleep in our extemporary cabin. As I roused myself, sat up, and looked down the boat to the stern sheets, Corine sitting there tiller in hand, her bright, fair hair ruffled by the breeze, and the blue seas surging all around, formed a brilliant little picture.

"Everything all right?" I called out.

"Yes, first rate," she said. "We've sailed ever so many miles. Come and steer while I get supper ready."

Oh, those happy early days of our cruise, when wind and weather favoured us; how beautiful they were! I seemed to be sailing in an enchanted boat, over an enchanted sea, with an enchanted—no, I mean an enchanting Princess by my side. Her courage was beyond praise. Never once during that voyage of ours did she utter one word of fear or apprehension. I, too, felt cheerful, for we had made a splendid run that day, of eighty miles or more.

"If we can only go on like this," said I, "we shall reach Scotland in a week."

"I shall really be sorry when we get to land," said Corine. "I am getting quite to like it. I wonder what has become of Lady Pat and Rhona."

"And the Rev. Maurice Kilmore?" said I, that miserable jealousy still working.

"Oh, the men will be all right," she answered.

"They will all be all right," said I, "if they get to some place in Iceland where vessels put in, and can find a safe landing-place. I am very glad I did n't go with them."

"You are?" And she gave me a sweet, grateful look and turned her head—to hide a blush, I fancied.

I was tempted to tell her, there and then, that I loved her more than anything in this world or the next, and would risk the worst perils of land and sea to call her mine; but I checked myself, feeling that to make a declaration of love then would be taking a mean advantage of her helplessness and of the strange chance which had thrown us together.

"If you had gone with the Kilmores," she said, presently, "I should have been left to lead that horrible life."

"How was it horrible?" I asked. "You seemed to have everything that the heart could desire."

"The life was luxurious enough," she answered, "certainly; but there was something behind it all which frightened me—plots, dark mysteries, dangers, I knew not what. There was always something I was dreading."

"Then you did n't know of the business carried on by your father and Coey?"

"No. They were frequently consulting together, but I was told nothing. I was never taken into their confidence. The Prince has sometimes talked to me of uniting the tribes and regaining a part of India, that was all."

"Will he be very much grieved at your having left him?" I asked her.

Corine hesitated before replying. "No, I don't think so," she said. "He never showed any particular affection for me. You see, until quite recently we cannot be said to have known one another."

"And you are not sorry to be parted from him?"

"No," she answered, without hesitation this time. "He treated me civilly, and not unkindly, but he never seemed to love me as a daughter. He wanted a lady to be the hostess at his grand entertainments, so I was brought from the convent. Do you know, I don't think he has ever cared for anyone, really. He is—what do you call it?—an opportunist, a man who makes use of other men as it suits him. He is not always sincere in what he says."

"Yes," I said; "he thought I would be useful, so wanted me to join with him in his undertakings."

"That was afterwards," said Corine, "when he got to know you; but when you first came on the yacht I am sure he bore you no good will. That was why I warned you."

I asked her why she thought this, but I could not get her to tell me. "Perhaps, after all, it was only my fancy," she said.

That night, while Corine was asleep, the wind gradually dropped, and the sail flapped limply against the mast as we rose and fell on the heaving

sea. All I could do was to get out the big oars, and slowly paddle the boat along with these. It was laborious work, for the pair was not meant to be used single-handed, but I could just manage to keep the boat in motion. Long before daybreak I was obliged to give up the work, and sit anxiously waiting for a change of weather. The sun rose, and still there was no wind. A slight swell continued, but the water was otherwise calm. By ten o'clock the heat was intense. The sun poured down upon us and was reflected up in our faces from the glassy surface. Clearly, if we were to encounter much of this sort of weather, it would be necessary to husband our provisions, and both Corine and I had short commons all through that long, weary day of waiting for the wind. As before, I took what rest I thought absolutely necessary in the afternoon.

At sundown there upsprang a wind, but alas! from the worst possible direction, for it blew from the south, almost heading us. All we could do was either to put out our substitute for a floating anchor and lie moored to it, or beat to windward; that is to say, take a zigzag course across the line of the wind, gaining a mile or so on each tack. Our boat was not a particularly good sailer, but it was better to do this than to remain at a standstill, though I feared that while tacking I might lose my reckoning altogether. To run as little risk of this as possible, I carefully timed myself, sailing for a quarter of an hour on one tack, then going about and sailing for a similar length of time on the other. All through

the night I did this, but by morning the wind had strengthened to such an extent, and we were taking in so much water, that we were again forced to lie on our floating anchor. In the afternoon, however, the weather improved, and the wind shifted round to the west. Happily, it had moderated somewhat, for if any of the great Atlantic rollers which now appeared had broken over us, it would have been a very serious matter.

Though the seas were high, I sailed on all through the next night, and we made good progress. Another day passed, and still the wind held in the west, and we continued to make for Scotland—at least, so I hoped. Twice we sighted vessels in the distance, and signalled them, but they probably did not see us, for they held on their course. It was a bitter disappointment, as our stock of provisions was rapidly lessening.

For still another twelve hours we had westerly winds, and a big, but not a breaking sea. Then came one of the worst experiences of our voyage. The wind died away in the night, and when morning came we found ourselves enveloped in a dense white fog. For two whole days folds of white mist enwrapped us, the cold, wet air saturating everything through and through. It was impossible to keep either dry or warm, though we had the oilskin hood over the bows of the dingey, and used the sail as a curtain to keep out the fog.

For a man so deeply in love as I, it may be imagined that the delights of Corine's society more

than compensated for the dangers and unpleasantness of our position. But it was not a time to think of love, or love's dalliance, for now I was consumed with an anxiety, amounting almost to terror, lest long before we came in sight of land our provisions might be exhausted. One whole night and half a day we had wasted lying at anchor, and owing to head winds we had been terribly delayed during two days. We had also been visited by calms during which we had not progressed one single foot. And now here were two more days during which we lay idly, our boat rolling from side to side as the swell lifted her and then dropped her into the troughs of the sea.

Another great fear possessed me. In this fog some whaler or tramp steamer might run us down.

Towards the end of the second day of fog and obscurity a strange and almost terrible thing happened. We had tired of crouching under our oil-skin awning, and were sitting in the stern of the boat, not a little depressed in spirits, when Corine, suddenly pointing into the mist, asked me if I did not see a dark shadow near us. My heart was up in my mouth, for I thought it must be some vessel that might run us down. But the thing, though long, was low, like a piece of wreckage on the water. For a moment I thought it might be even the back of a huge whale. It did not appear to move, yet imperceptibly grew plainer, until I saw—though this was not until half an hour had elapsed after Corine had first sighted it—that it was a ship's



boat of some kind. That strange attraction which floating things have for one another on a calm surface, brought us nearer and nearer together. So close came it, that I was at last able to reach it with an oar and bring it alongside.

It was the pinnacle of the *Lorelei*, but without mast, oars, sail, accumulators, cushions, ropes, or fittings! Everything had gone out of her. She was simply a derelict hull full of water, and floating only by the buoyancy of her wooden planks and timbers.

"My poor friends!" I thought, "then this is the end of you!" I did not doubt that the pinnacle had shipped a big sea, and sunk beneath the weight of her passengers and their luggage. All on board had been drowned, and the boat, lightened, had floated to the surface and righted herself. But how came she there? She could not have travelled as fast as our dingey, and we, I felt certain, were many miles from the place where we left the *Lorelei*. What if all my reckonings were wrong, and we had, after all, been working more or less in a circle! I knew of no currents out here in the great ocean which could have brought us thus together.

I did not tell Corine of my fears. On recognising the pinnacle, which she at once did by the gorgeous, gilded carving on the back of the stern seat, she cried out that Lady Pat and Rhona were drowned. I tried to reassure her by saying that they had no doubt been picked up by some passing vessel, which had abandoned the pinnacle to its fate. But this



suggestion I did not for a moment accept myself, for I knew that no sea-captain would cast adrift such a very valuable vessel as this pinnace, which was of considerable value owing to its beautiful fittings and splendid machinery. I tried hard to appear cheerful, but this blow was a terrible one.

I had some thoughts of bailing out the pinnace and transferring our little cargo and gear to her; but on reflection decided against this course. Though she was a safer boat than our own, on account of her size, yet for the same reason I should not be able to row her with any speed worth mentioning, nor should we sail so quickly as in the dingey. At all risks, we must reach the shore with the least possible delay, before our provisions were exhausted, and in the pinnace we should certainly be longer about it than in the smaller craft. I tried to push the Kilmores' ill-fated craft away from us, but it returned again and again, and all through the night grated against our sides. It was as if our friends had sent this dumb messenger after us to call us persistently to their rescue. Poor creatures! as if we could rescue them from their tomb hundreds of fathoms down. I never spent a more weird, more horrible night.

Morning came at last, and still the pinnace floated near, keeping us mournful company. If she drifted away a few yards, it was only to return a minute later, striking us sometimes dangerously hard as the swell, and the splashing water inside her, caused her to roll heavily.



About noon I felt—and how thankfully!—a slight air blowing in my face, and saw the fog beginning to move across the sea. It was a north wind, fortunately, and though for hours we were still enfolded in the rolling mists, we ran before it, leaving that devoted hull of sad memories miles astern. Indeed we made fine headway towards our destination, provided of course we were heading rightly, of which fact I was not well assured after this visitation of the water-logged pinnacle. The north wind, sometimes veering slightly towards the westward, blew continuously for several days.

And here I seem to have lost count of time, for I cannot record exactly what took place; but on one of those days Corine came to me as I was steering, and told me, with a strained look in her dear, sweet face, that we had come to the end of all our food, except six biscuits.

A little later and there was nothing more to eat. But we had reason to be thankful that abundance of water remained. We should not die from thirst, most terrible of deaths.

At the bottom of one of the lockers I had seen a small tin case. This had not yet been opened, so I asked Corine if it did not contain food of some kind.

“No,” she said, “that is supposed to be my fortune. I think my father was always fearful that he might die a violent death, or lose all his property. The day we left Southampton he gave me that tin case, and told me it contained jewels of



great value which belonged to my mother. I was to keep them, but not to open the case unless something happened to him. The contents were mine, and I was never to give them up, even if claimed as being part of my father's property."

I asked her no further questions. A few pounds of meat just then would have been of greater value to us than all the precious stones of Golconda. For two days we had no food at all, and I saw my poor girl's face gradually get white and pinched, and felt a deadly weakness coming over me from exhaustion, anxiety, and want of food.

One morning, after a calm night, the sun rose red, but soon disappeared behind the dense bank of black-looking clouds which were gathering all round the horizon. There was a light and fitful wind from the N.E., which gradually became gusty, culminating before long in a furious gale. I had to take three reefs in the little lug-sail, and even then we were carrying more canvas than was safe. But as we ran before the gale I rejoiced that we were getting every second nearer and nearer to land. I might have put out the floating anchor, but thought it better to run the risk of being drowned than starved. It was terrible work steering the little vessel, with those huge breaking waves forever pursuing us, catching us up, tossing us in their foaming crests, then letting us slide down their backs into a vale of water, where, sheltered from the wind, we were momentarily becalmed. Then another mountainous sea would come towering up behind us, lift



us up on its angry head, expose us to the fury of the gale, and drop us as it hurried on its course. If I had once allowed the boat to broach to—that is to say, to turn broadside on to these great sea-horses—we should have been instantly overwhelmed. It was the most terrible piece of steering that ever I had done, and may I never see the like again! I began to feel that my strength was giving way, and that I could no longer trust myself to hold the helm steady, when Corine, who was looking ahead,—much of my attention was mainly given to the huge waves which were forever following us,—suddenly gave a little cry.

“I believe I can see land,” she said.

The spindrift was flying, and obscuring the distance, but peering eagerly over the smoking seas, I thought that I, too, saw a line of mountains. In some ten or fifteen minutes the matter was placed beyond doubt. Clearly, we were running on to a shore of some kind, and—I shuddered to think of it—a lee shore. Unless we could find some rocky promontory or small island behind which we could take shelter, these great seas would lift us up, and then cast us down on the rocks, smashing the boat into matchwood, and leaving little chance of escape for Corine and myself. It was hopeless now to put out our miserable apology for a floating anchor, we were so near. The terrific wind and huge seas would have carried us on to the shore in a very little time. We could only run on, and put our trust in Providence. Fate would indeed be cruel to destroy us



at the end of our voyage, after we had dared so much, and surmounted so many dangers.

Nearer and nearer we came to this inhospitable coast, until I could hear the thunder of the breakers beating against the rocks, and trembled to think what might be our fate within a very few minutes. Corine, acting under my directions, had lowered the hood; and I told her, the moment the boat struck the shore, to rush to the bows, jump overboard, and run up the beach, if there was one, as fast as possible. I dreaded running on the base of some perpendicular cliff, in which case death was practically certain. We were within two hundred yards of the shore now, and the lookout was as bad as it could possibly be. Then I thought I saw, a little to the left of us, a rocky point projecting, and for this I steered, though several times I had to bring the boat in a line with the course of the rolling breakers to prevent her taking in a sea and being swamped. I was obliged to put out an oar to steer with—the rudder seemed to have lost its power. There was no doubt now that my worst fears were realised, for right ahead of us rose an abrupt wall of rock against which the mighty waves of the North Sea were breaking, casting up their angry heads high in the air, and then recoiling and clashing with the waves that followed after them. All round the promontory was a great turmoil of wild, white water, but I steered for it, none the less. Anything was better than that wave-beaten precipice.

On we went, lifted high up by huge waves, then



low down in the trough of water, so low that even the shore was hidden from our sight. Right into the race off the point we plunged, taking in water on each side of us. It was a diabolical, hellish place in a storm, if ever one existed on any coast. And then, suddenly—oh, thank God!—we rounded the point, and were out of it all, in a quiet, sheltered spot, where the water rose and fell, truly, but was dark and clear. We were saved.

What happened next I do not know, for I fainted. When I recovered consciousness I found myself with my head in Corine's arms. The keel of the boat was jarring gently, and looking round I saw that we had run on a slope of white sand, in a small and almost land-locked bay.

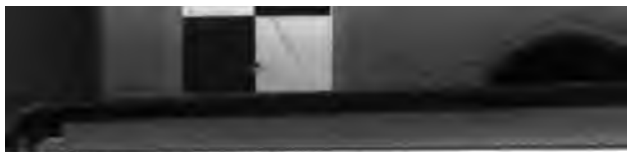


CHAPTER XXIV

THE LONELY ISLE

It was good once more to tread on solid, immovable ground, but for the first quarter of an hour both of us had the strange feeling that the land was rising and falling under our feet, continuing the sensation of the pitching and tossing we had so long experienced at sea. For a little while we could not walk steadily.

We appeared to have entered a narrow channel between two islands, or an island and the mainland, through which the tide was running fiercely. I judged by the position of the seaweed on the rocks that it was then nearly high water, so made no endeavour to drag our boat up the shore, which would, indeed, have been a task beyond my strength. I merely joined together all the ropes I could lay my hands on, making them into one long painter, and with this, moored our good little vessel to a lump of stone which lay conveniently on the shore. The island, beyond the strait, on whose precipitous cliffs we had been all but wrecked, appeared to consist mainly of a great mountain rising some two thousand feet in height, with bare, jagged, volcanic rocks



near its summit. I could not then determine with certainty if we ourselves were on the mainland, for our small sandy bay of refuge was surrounded by an amphitheatre of hills, covered, except near their summits, with heather. These shut out much of the view. The most striking feature of the place was, perhaps, the vast number of sea-birds—gulls, kittiwakes, cormorants, oyster-catchers, guillemots, and divers and ducks of various kinds. Many of these were circling around us, uttering shrill cries. Among the cliffs on the other side of the small strait were white patches, showing where thousands of these sea-birds must have nested earlier in the year. Of human life there was absolutely no trace—no house, boat, domestic animal, nor even the slightest evidence of agriculture.

My first consideration, after attending to the safety of the boat, was, I need hardly say, how to obtain food for Corine. Water there was in abundance. At the back of the bay was a little narrow, steep-sided ravine, through the bottom of which a pellucid stream trickled, losing itself in the soft, silvery sand of the shore. I collected a few small pieces of driftwood which had maybe been brought by ocean currents from Siberia and were left high and dry by the spring tides. Then, crossing the bay, I carefully examined the rocks which closed it in. Under the seaweed I found some large mussels, and these provided our first meal in this lonely land. A singular feature of the place was the total absence of trees, but there were some small shrubs, only a



230 THE PASSING OF PRINCE ROZAN

few inches high, bearing berries, and among these I found some small, dry, fragmentary twigs and other vegetable matter, which enabled me to light a drift-wood fire and roast some of the mussels in their shells. We were both ravenous, but feared to satisfy our hunger with this fare lest it should make us ill. I bitterly lamented that I had not brought a gun and some ammunition with me. It was a serious oversight; for though many of the sea-birds around us were no doubt somewhat rank and fishy in flavour, still they would have kept us from starving for many a day.

I had not the slightest idea what land we were on, and was anxious to climb the hills at the back of the bay and take an observation. But after our little meal of mussels we both felt so drowsy that I saw we could do little more that day than take much-needed rest. I therefore unshipped the oilskin hood from the boat, brought it on shore, and rigged it up as a kind of tent. In this I made a bed for Corine of the berry-bearing bushes I have already mentioned. I had been exposed so much to the weather out on the open sea, that it was almost a luxury to lie down under the shelter of a ledge of rock, and sleep.

It was about five o'clock in the evening when we lay down, but the sun was high the next day before I awoke. Corine, who was already up, had collected mussels and lit the fire.

"Do you feel stronger to-day?" she asked, looking at me anxiously. "This is not much of food for a man, I fear."



But there was then nothing better to be obtained, and we both ate our mussel breakfast contentedly enough, and only too thankful to have escaped the dangers of those wild seas.

Leaving Corine in charge of the boat, I made an expedition to the higher grounds, to see if I could discover any signs of human beings. Owing to the precipitous, rocky sides of this bay, there was no way out of it overland except by the ravine, and up this I clambered, sometimes finding myself in very difficult positions. Twice I had to take off my boots and get into the ice-cold water. My progress was slow, but eventually I attained a kind of grassy plateau. Thence I could see that the land beyond the strait, on which we had been so nearly wrecked, was, as I supposed, a small island. It lay to the northward of us. East and west were a few miles of undulating, heather-clad country, with rocks breaking through the surface here and there, and beyond, a desolate ocean on which no sign of vessel was visible. Behind me, to the southward, the land rose some five hundred feet and blocked the view. The ascent would have been easy enough under more favourable circumstances, but owing to my exhausted condition, it was two hours before I reached the summit. There I learned, to my dismay, that we were on a small and apparently uninhabited island, one of a considerable group which stretched away to the south. The wind was blowing so fiercely that I could scarcely stand, and, as on the day before, the great rolling waves of the North



Sea were thundering on the rock-bound shores, throwing up the milk-white spray almost to the summits of the precipices which appeared to guard nearly all these islands.

For a long time I could not imagine what part of the world we had reached. At last I remembered that midway between Iceland and Scotland lies a group of islands called the Faröes, belonging to Denmark, many of them wild and uninhabited. Perhaps we were on one of these. One thing was evident,—we must stop where we were until the weather abated, when we might take an opportunity of a fair wind to sail southward, and endeavour to discover some harbour or coastwise hamlet.

As I looked out over those raging seas, I thought sadly of my poor friends. They had left the yacht in a large boat, well found, well provisioned, with but a comparatively short journey to land. Corine and I had stolen away in the night, with our poor little stock of provisions, and a mast and sail belonging to another boat; yet we had crossed hundreds of miles of sea in safety, and reached land at last, while the Kilmores had been drowned. From them my thoughts wandered to my chambers in the Temple. I wondered if my great case had been heard, and judgment delivered; and if King, who I now felt certain was closely associated with Coey, had surrendered to his bail. There seemed, indeed, no reason why he should surrender, for Coey was not likely to return to England. I wondered if my absence would cause me to lose much practice at



the Bar, for when I married Corine that would be a consideration. And I had no doubt, then, that she would have me, though I carefully avoided mentioning the subject to her.

Clambering down the ravine, I saw, some few yards above my head, a sea-bird, a young one I judged it from its plumage, and this was so ignorant of the destructive peculiarities of the human race, that it allowed me to catch it with my hand. We roasted it over our driftwood fire for lunch, eating a few baked mussels salted with sea-water by way of *entremets*.

In the afternoon, it being high water, I was able to launch the boat, and determined to try and catch fish. We had a couple of hand-lines on board, which I had used once or twice during our voyage, when becalmed, but without success. To face the broken water outside the island which protected us from the gale, was out of the question, but I thought it likely we might find a fish or two in the sound. My great difficulty was to moor the boat, for we had no anchor, nor sufficient rope. What I at last did was to paddle her out to what appeared to be a suitable spot, and hold her against the current by continuous rowing while Corine fished. Very soon she brought up one of the singular blue fish peculiar to those waters, and then two codling of about four or five pounds each.

"Oh, this is more than delightful!" she cried. "Don't let us ever leave this beautiful spot. I should like to spend my whole life here."

" And so should I," I said, " but—— "

" But what ? "

" Well, the sky is not blue every day; and think of the rains and snows of winter. But some day we will come here again, if you like, with a tent and proper provisions, and spend an idyllic summer in this wild land."

Then I think she saw what this would involve, for she turned her head, and did not answer.

At the end of half an hour I found I could no longer work the heavy oars against the strong tide, so we went ashore, carrying with us sufficient fish for our present needs.

A whole week we spent living this primitive life, for the weather was too bad to venture out from our little haven. I discovered the haunts of the sea-birds, and found little difficulty in catching a sufficient number to supply our modest wants, and of fish there was an abundance. Fortunately, we had no rain, and though the nights were cold, and our shelter hardly sufficient, we had both become, by this time, inured to hardship, and suffered no inconvenience from the keen night air of those high latitudes.

At last the gale moderated, the huge seas began to lessen, and there seemed some prospect of leaving our beautiful island. Even then we had to wait two days, for the swell continued, breaking so heavily at the mouth of the sound that I dared not take the dingy through it.

It was a keen, frosty September morning, with a



pale blue sky overhead, streaked with light, fleecy clouds, the wind blowing moderately from the west, when we turned the stem of the dingey seaward, and sailed out of the sound. Except on the west coast of Norway, I had not seen more magnificent scenery than that afforded by this curious group of islands, on which mountains, several over two thousand feet high, towered upwards. The precipitous, rock-bound coast was one of the features of the scene.

All day long we sailed in and out between islands, meeting sometimes with dangerous seas off points where the tide ran fiercely, and rocks not far below the surface caused the water to eddy and leap up angrily around us. In some channels the tide was our greatest danger, for a current of, I am certain, not less than five miles an hour was running. Late in the afternoon we saw the first signs of our fellow-men—a little wooden house, on the roof of which green grass was growing, perched high up on the hillside. I had hardly seen this before Corine called my attention to a fishing-boat which was being rapidly rowed towards us. I looked in vain for a place to land. No friendly inviting bay with sandy shores was visible, but on all sides this terrible rocky coast on which the swell was breaking.

The boat soon reached us. I signalled the men to stop, but they rowed on, shouting out to me a few words in a language I did not understand, while the steersman turned round and waved his arm seaward. It was a beamy, double-ended craft, high in

the stem and stern, of the type used by the Vikings of old, and common in Norway at the present day. The men were big, blue-eyed, fair-haired fellows. At the top of the mast I saw, to my surprise, a coat was made fast. Corine suggested it was being dried there, but we learned better later on. Quickly the light, buoyant craft, urged by four sturdy Norsemen, hurried toward the shore and disappeared behind an island. A few minutes later I noticed that smoke was rising, as if a big fire was being made on the coast. Evidently this was a signal of some kind, for from every bay and inlet, boats began hurrying, the men straining at their oars as if every second was of importance.

Very soon there must have been not less than seventy or eighty of these four-oared boats, all making for the same point seaward. Many of them passed us; and though they regarded us curiously, and answered me when I spoke to them, they would not stop for us, and their language was quite incomprehensible. I tried Norwegian, of which I had a smattering, but fared no better than with English.

We had been drifting with the tide, between two islands, but now I set the sail, and slowly reached out on to the open sea, following the native fleet. This was ranged in semicircular formation, about a mile, or perhaps a little more, away. The prows of the boats were all toward us, and the great crescent was now returning very slowly toward the shore, some of the crews rowing, others beating the water with their oars and shouting loudly. As we got



nearer to them I saw huge monsters rolling over in the sea from time to time, and at once guessed that a herd, or school, of whales was being driven inshore.

Gradually the fleet of boats came on. The excitement of the men was intense. Many of them, I noticed, were armed with stones attached to long thongs. These they threw again and again into the sea, recovering them by means of the thongs, while the shouting and splashing with the oars were continued. Every now and again a great black back would appear above the water, and then disappear, as the whales, in their terror, worked nearer and nearer to the sound out of which I had just sailed. I had now to lower my lug-sail and take to the oars to get the dingey well out of the way. I took up a position at the southern horn of the crescent, and slowly worked my way into the sound with the fishermen, who were too eager in pursuit of their quarry to pay any attention to Corine and myself.

The excitement was infectious. Soon I found myself shouting with the rest, standing up and belabouring the water with an oar whenever one of the great black creatures appeared near us. Thus we worked right up the sound until a deep, narrow bay or fjord opened to the southward. And now, with greater noise and shoutings and splashings than ever, the crescent began to close round the unfortunate cetaceans, which, like silly sheep, allowed themselves to be driven into this rock-bound trap. At the head of the bay, where many persons were



238 THE PASSING OF PRINCE ROZAN

standing awaiting the coming of the boats, a broad green valley trended gently down to the sloping shore, and I had no doubt in my mind that there the water was very shallow.

When we were not far from the strand, a blue-eyed, tawny-bearded giant of a man, who had acted throughout as leader of the whalers, stood up in the prow of his boat, lance in hand, and presently delivered a mighty thrust into the carcase of one of the biggest whales. The weapon broke in the wound, and the poor beast, frantic with fear and pain, rushed blundering on into the shallow water, and lay there stranded, beating the surface with his huge tail. But not he alone, for the whole herd, still acting sheep-like and driven on by their pursuers, followed.

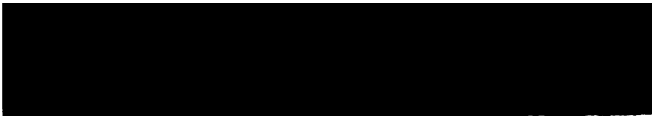
Now came the turn of the men and women who had been waiting in groups on shore. Rushing knee-deep into the water, they began to stab and slay the whales one after another, and when opportunity occurred, sticking huge hooks into them and dragging them on shore by ropes. It was a bloody, awful scene of man waging a destructive war against the lower animals. But man did not come off quite scathless, for two boats were smashed to pieces by chance blows from the tails of the doomed creatures. The fishermen escaped, climbing into the nearest boats, and little notice was taken of the incident.

Corine was almost alarmed by the fierceness of these wild-looking islanders, who roared, and belowed, and plunged their spears wildly into the great



carcasses which were floundering in the turmoil and dying the water red. Not a single whale escaped that awesome massacre. Before nightfall two hundred great carcasses lay silent and still on the strand.

And this was our welcome back to civilisation!



CHAPTER XXV

ARRESTED

AFTER the wholesale slaughter there came a great to-do of marking and apportioning the whales among the different boats' crews. But many of the fishermen had completed their share of the work, and a crowd gathered round us. Corine shrank towards me timidly, for these northern giants, panting with their recent exertions, and besmeared with blood, looked not a little terrible. Several of them carried long black-handled knives. With these murderous-looking weapons, those whales which had been dragged ashore half alive had been despatched by a terrible stab through the vertebræ just behind the blow-hole.

I began telling my tale to them, speaking at first in English, and then trying my best Norwegian, but I spoke for some time without result. Presently an old man pushed his way through the crowd, offered me a huge, slimy, sanguinary paw, and said: "English? How do you do?"—thus apparently reaching his limit so far as our language was concerned. He departed, to return quickly with the most splendid man of the lot, the Whale Captain, if I may call him so, and he, I was right glad to find, had a very



fair knowledge of English, and was able to understand our story. He looked at me gravely.

"Yes," he said. "You come from over there—many miles away—over the sea. You are like Harveke. Same good man I hope."

We marvelled over "Harveke," and learned later that it was a Faröese word meaning *One coming over the sea*, given as a name to Heine, a Norwegian student. Sometime in the sixteenth century, he and five other students, when cruising up the coast of Norway, were caught in a storm and driven out to sea. The boat was washed ashore on one of the Faröe Islands, and Heine was the sole survivor. He married a Faröese girl, and introduced the Protestant faith into the country, suppressing the Roman Catholic religion and bishopric.

"We left a big ship near Iceland," I told our friendly giant, and he appeared to translate the information for the benefit of the rest, who showed astonishment and laid their heads together.

"In little boat?" he asked, pointing to our dingey.

I nodded.

"You want food and drink," he said. "Come, I will give him you."

"Our giant is very friendly," I whispered to Corine. "Don't you be frightened of these fellows. I expect they are rather good chaps when you get to know them. I would much rather trust them than those swarthy gentlemen the Prince had for servants."

"I am not frightened while I am with you,



Lucas," she whispered. It was the first time she had called me by my Christian name. "But they do look very terrible, don't they?"

Our long-haired, tawny-bearded friend, who stood some six feet three in his great sea-boots, strode along rapidly, and we had to trot to keep up with him. He took us half a mile up a beautiful valley with mountains on both sides, leading us to a group of quaint-looking cottages, the lower portions of which were built of massive blocks of stone. On these was a small weather-boarded building roofed with green sods of turf. He called out some name, and a pleasant-looking woman came to the door. A few words passed between them, and he strode off again back to his dead whales, saying as he went, "Good-bye! I will see you again at night."

It was a gloomy little hut inside, reeking of dried fish, and a most peculiar odour which I afterwards found came from very high, dried mutton, of which the Farøese are particularly fond. Seating us on a bench, the good woman very quickly served us with hot milk and whisky, and some slices of soddened-looking black bread. Then she took down a slab of dark-looking stuff, from which she hacked several pieces, and began cooking them. This dish, when I came to taste it, much resembled strong old cow-beef; but I found afterwards that we had been making our first essay in Whale *à la* Farøese. I could not describe it as altogether a dainty dish, but a most pleasant change after our diet of rank sea-birds and baked mussels.



I could write a small volume concerning our curious experiences among these good people, with whom we stayed for over a week. Suffice it to say that in the evening there was a grand rejoicing at the success of the whale-hunt, and we witnessed an extraordinary dance in a long shed not far from our cottage. Here men and women took hands, and chanting a monotonous tune, danced round and round in a circle, those who tired falling out, and others taking their places. There was a good deal of drinking, and the results of it were in some cases only too apparent. It was a day or two before all these good people, who had come together for the hunt, left in their boats, singing a weird song of triumph as they rowed down the bay.

Boro, our host and good friend, was evidently under the impression that we had been shipwrecked, and escaped in a small boat together. I need hardly say that we did not undeceive him. He took us up to a larger house among the mountains, and there we lived with his wife and family for several days.

The islanders simply worshipped Corine for her grace and beauty. I used to see them hiding behind rocks, simply to watch her. Never shall I forget the kindness shown us by those good-hearted, hospitable people. When the time came for us to leave them, Boro and his wife would take no payment, but, on the other hand, pressed upon us several curiosities which we had admired. I have still one of their long whale-knives, with a black bog-wood



handle beautifully inlaid with brass and mother-of-pearl. I keep it as a memento of my good friend the Whale Captain. All being well, we hope to visit him again some day. As he would take no money, I asked Corine if we might not leave behind the dingey, for which we had no further use as we had decided to sail in a Farøese fishing-boat down to Thorshavn, the capital of the islands, in time to catch the Iceland steamer, which touched there on its way to Scotland. Even this he would not accept, but at last agreed to take care of it for us until we came again, using it in the meanwhile as much as he pleased.

With Boro at the helm, and three sturdy islanders to help work the sails, and row if needs be, we set forth about a week after the whale-hunt. It was a long day's sail, and we reached the little wooden town of Thorshavn late in the evening. It lies in a bay, and sheltered from the rollers of the North Sea by a narrow island called Naalso. On the north side, on a rocky promontory, was a tiny fort, while to the south the cliffs rose precipitously, and swarmed with wild-fowl.

How we fell in with good friends at Thorshavn, who entertained us right royally, is no part of my story. Let me only say now, that they have my everlasting gratitude for their kindness to Corine and myself. What little there was to see in the place, we saw—the large house of the Governor, and the garden wherein trees and shrubs grow, as great curiosities in the Farøe Islands as the bittern in



England. We even went into the Legislative doll's house and saw where those Members of Parliament sit who receive for their services the extravagant fee of two kroner a day; for a modified kind of Home Rule, and payment of members (on a small scale), are among the singularities of this strange land.

We were genuinely sorry to part with Boro, who left Thorshavn the next day; and some forty-eight hours later we found ourselves once more on the deck of a large vessel—large, at least, compared with those we had been voyaging in during the past three weeks. There were not many passengers on the screw steamer, and these were for some time invisible, as the weather was bad and our craft rolled and pitched in a most outrageous fashion. When they came one by one on deck and heard our story, or so much of it as we thought well to tell them, we were the objects of considerable interest.

We got a little shelter between Shetland and Orkney, but on leaving those islands astern of us we were once more exposed to the full vigour of the North Sea billows, which is saying a good deal. We made Leith at an early hour one morning, and then came a long, tedious railway journey to London. We ought, I suppose, to have been jubilant at once more being within reach of home, but Corine was very silent and depressed. I attributed her sadness to the loss of the Kilmores.

"Where will you go when we get to London?" I said. "You have some friends?"

"Go?" she answered, absently. "I had not

thought of it. No, I have no friends now Lady Kilmore has gone. I shall have to go to an hotel."

"Corine, dear!" I said,—we were alone in the carriage,—"you need not stop there long, for very soon I will come and claim you as my wife. I have n't asked you before—I did n't like to; but now, after all we have gone through together, you will not refuse me?"

She turned deadly pale as I spoke, and tried to answer me, but could not say one word. Finally she hid her face in her hands and burst into tears. It was a strange answer to my proposal. I drew her to me and tried to comfort her. She laid her head on my breast, and sobbed as if her heart would break. When she had recovered herself a little, I whispered that I was sure that I might take her silence as a sign of acquiescence, but to my astonishment she merely shook her head, saying:

"No, no! that can never be."

"Oh, don't say that!" I urged—"don't say that yet! You have no idea of the love I bear you. I have loved you from the very first day I set eyes on you, and I ventured to think, dear, that you had some regard for me."

"I have, I have," she cried piteously; "but please don't say any more. You don't know how you pain me."

"Perhaps you will give me another answer some day," I said.

"No," she answered, "I can never give but one



answer. Please don't ask me again, and try and forget that we have ever talked about this."

Through all the troubles and sufferings I had endured, none seemed so cruel as this last unexpected blow; I had felt so certain of her. But from her manner, and even from what she said, I still had hopes, for I knew intuitively that she loved me. She was so upset and overwrought just then, that I said nothing more. Arriving in London, I took her to an hotel on the Embankment, and then, as soon as I had been to my chambers and changed my clothes, hurried off to call at the Kilmores' house, on the slight chance of anything having been heard of them. Their man opened the door to me.

"Have you any news of Sir Patrick and Lady Kilmore?" I asked instantly.

"No, sir," was the reply; "not lately. They are yachting with Prince Rozan. We understood you were with them, sir." And he coughed apologetically.

I did not know what steps to take next. Though I felt certain my friends had been lost at sea, I did not feel justified in stating it as a fact without some further proof; so I said nothing more to the man, but took a cab to the Temple.

My clerk, Aaron Rodd, turned almost green when he saw me.

"You 've come back, sir?" he gasped out with astonishment.

"Yes," I said; "why not? But I have had



trouble enough to get back, I can tell you. Is King's case over ? ”

“ King 's bolted,” said Aaron, grimly, “ and so has his bail, Coey. Oh, there 's been a pretty row about him, I can tell you, while you 've been away.”

I became more and more puzzled to know what line to adopt with regard to these people.

“ Well,” I said, “ what of Coey ? How has there been a row about him ? ”

“ There have been proceedings, sir, and his papers have been seized. There 's no end of people in it. According to the counterfoils of his cheque-books, he 's been paying large sums of money away right and left to members of the peerage and lots of well-known people.”

“ Oh ? ” I said.

Aaron shifted from foot to foot uncomfortably. Evidently he had something more to say, and the saying of it was none too pleasant.

“ Sharpe, who was solicitor in the case, has also bolted,” he said ; “ and they 've been coupling your name with his and Coey's.”

“ How is that ? ” I asked.

“ Well, sir, you see, you were believed to have gone yachting with Coey and his friend. There are a lot of queer stories going the rounds about Prince Rozan. They do say that it was he who was backing Coey up, and that it was owing to no more supplies coming from that quarter that Coey had to make a bolt. They made a tremendous lot of it in the papers—big head-lines, and ‘ The Coey Case ’



at the top of all the evening posters.—Excuse me, sir, there 's someone at the door."

He went out, and presently I heard loud voices in my lobby.

"I 'm coming in, I tell you!"

"You are quite mistaken," was Aaron's reply.

"He is n't here."

"I 'm going to see for myself."

The door opened, and in walked the detective who had been employed getting up evidence in King's case.

"Good afternoon!" I said. "I hear your bird has flown."

"Yes, you 're right, Mr. Gilbert," said the detective, "but—it 's a very unpleasant duty, but you know, sir, a man must do his duty—I 've got a warrant here, sir, for your arrest. I suppose you 'll go quietly."

"Warrant!—Arrest!" I said, staggering back into my chair. "What do you mean?"

"You are charged with conspiracy, in aiding King to escape. As a friend, Mr. Gilbert, I advise you to say nothing, as anything you say I must take down in writing, and it will be used in evidence against you.—You had better call a cab, young man"—this to Aaron. "I won't make it more unpleasant than I can help for you, sir. Very sorry. Must do my duty."

And then I was haled off to the Police Court like a common malefactor.



CHAPTER XXVI

AT BOW STREET

I DO not find it at all pleasant to look back upon the period immediately following my arrest. Rarely had innocent man had a more plausible case made out against him. It was alleged that I, Sharpe, and Coey had together arranged the escape of King in order to defeat the ends of justice. The telegram which, according to my statement at the Central Criminal Court, came from an important witness in Africa, was traced to one of Coey's South African correspondents. Mr. Justice Blakeney was called as a witness against me, and told the magistrate how I had come to him in his private room and pressed upon him the desirability of deferring the trial, though he himself had told me that he considered my case sufficiently strong without the witness from Africa. It was true that I had insisted on bail being fixed in a heavy sum, but as the bail were Coey and a puppet of his who had also disappeared, this, it was urged, was a mere blind on my part. I had gone off in company with Coey; that was another bad feature in the case. To crown all, my clerk had attempted to deceive the detective who came to arrest me, telling him I was not in my



chambers, and thus satisfying those who did not know the true facts, that I was fearing arrest and had given orders accordingly.

If prisoners at that time had been allowed to give evidence on oath, I might perhaps have cleared myself before the magistrate, but my mere statement was, of course, worth very little in the face of the sworn evidence. Never was man more perplexed as to the course he ought to adopt than I during that prosecution. One person, alone, in London knew the true facts of the case, but I felt I would rather suffer any disgrace and punishment than bring her into Court and force her to give damning evidence against her father for the sake of clearing her lover.

At the first hearing before the magistrate, merely formal evidence was taken; but the case became noised abroad, and very soon assumed the proportions of a *cause célèbre*. Coey's affairs were already the talk of, not only London, but the whole of England. The indignation against the erstwhile Great Financier was intense. Of all the persons supposed to be implicated and against whom a case could be made out, I alone had been captured. I was to be sacrificed to the popular vengeance.

Coey, with what looked like Satanic maliciousness, had made entries in his cheque-books which had brought disgrace on numbers of influential people. Those, and they were not a few, who hired out their titles for company-promoting purposes in return for skilfully veiled payments in money or

shares, well merited the opprobrium which fell upon them. Others, such as my poor friend Kilmore, were, I felt satisfied, innocent enough in intention, however shady their business relations may have appeared without explanation of the true facts.

In Coey's cheque-book was found an unsigned cheque drawn in my favour for £2000. Whether the fellow ever intended to offer me this sum as a bribe, or whether he merely left this damning evidence against me to blast my character, and bring me more and more into the power of himself and Prince Rozan, I cannot say. Possibly he would have offered me the money had I not so readily and in all innocence made myself his tool and obtained King's release.

Sharpe, it appeared from the cheque-book, had received no less a sum than £20,000, paid, according to the counterfoil, for "legal services in 'Reg. v. King.'" Evidently great importance was attached by the gang to the escape of the semi-paralysed prisoner.

Another strong piece of evidence against me was a note I had sent Coey. It had reference to our cruise in the *Lorelei*, and contained this unfortunately worded sentence: *I am glad to say I have made everything safe in King's case.* I had written hurriedly and not stopped to pick my words. My meaning simply was that I had arranged to leave my brief in charge of a friend who would act as substitute for me if by any accident—and accidents are not unknown at sea—I was unable to return in time



for the September Sessions at the Old Bailey. I need hardly say a very different construction was placed on the words. As bad luck would have it, my friend who had undertaken to "devil" my brief should the necessity occur, could not give evidence in support of my explanation, as he was then lying dangerously ill of typhoid fever.

I had the best legal advice possible, of course, but my solicitors did not hesitate to say that the outlook was bad. I judged by their manner that even they suspected me. Perhaps this was not surprising, for I would not tell them all I knew concerning Prince Rozan and the circumstances under which I had left the yacht. I may have been quixotic in this. No doubt I was; but I think any man worthy of the name, who had the reputation of a woman he loved in his hands, would have done as I did.

The second time I appeared before the magistrate, much of the evidence I have referred to was given and I was again remanded. Bail was refused, for the offence was regarded as an extremely serious one. The magistrate was perhaps justified in thinking that I might take to flight as King had done.

For the third time I stood in the dock at Bow Street. Further evidence was given against me, mainly in connection with discoveries made among Coey's papers, relating to moneys—bribes, in fact—paid to those who had been strenuously fighting for the release of King. The case for the prosecution was closed. I was stolidly awaiting the formal order of committal, when, to my amazement, for we



had arranged to reserve Aaron Rodd's evidence until the trial, my solicitor informed the Court that he had a witness for the defence. He immediately called Princess Rozan, and before I could make one word of protest, Corine was in the box and being sworn.

I found out afterwards that my dear girl had insisted upon this without my being forewarned, as she feared I would keep her out of this trouble at all hazard. As she stood there right nobly, her pale face beautiful as ever, a murmur of interest arose and every eye was turned on her. She gave her evidence simply and straightforwardly, telling, step by step, of that strange cruise we had taken together within the Arctic circle, and of our still more remarkable return voyage, just as I have already related in these pages; but finally she made a statement so astounding that even the magistrate himself, case-hardened as he was against surprise, exhibited amazement.

"Have you seen the man, King, since his escape?" asked my solicitor.

"Yes," answered Corine; but her voice trembled.

"Where?" was the next question.

"On the *Lorelei*," she replied.

"Indeed! Did he pass under the name of 'King,' or under some other name?"

"He called himself Prince Rozan," she said.

"He was the man whom everyone knew as Prince Rozan in London."

So startled was everyone concerned in the case

at this revelation, that for a minute or more the business of the Court was at a standstill. Nothing was heard but the buzz of voices.

"Have you any reason to suppose that the defendant knew Prince Rozan and King were one and the same man?" my solicitor asked when the Court was quiet again, and the slight hubbub had subsided.

"No, I am sure he did not," answered Corine before the solicitor for the prosecution could object to the question.

Then followed a long and tedious cross-examination, which was as great a trial to me as to my poor girl. How long had she known that Prince Rozan was identical with the criminal King? To this she replied that she first knew it on seeing King in the dock, disguised, and acting the part of a paralytic.

"I think," said the solicitor for the prosecution, "that I am entitled to ask this young lady what her position is with regard to the prisoner. Your Worship will remember that, according to her account, they were weeks together in an open boat, and now she casts this grave reflection upon one who was a shining light in London society."

My solicitor objected, but the magistrate overruled him.

"We were only friends," said Corine, answering the question with an effort.

"Never anything more?"

"No."

"Do you really mean to say he has never spoken to you of love?"

"You are needlessly cruel in these questions. Mr. Gilbert asked me to be his wife, and I refused."

"I think you have carried that portion of your cross-examination far enough," said the magistrate, significantly.

"Very well," said the solicitor. "Now, I want to know how it was, when Sir Patrick Kilmore and other of your guests were turned adrift, the prisoner did not go with them."

"My father would not let him. Mr. Gilbert was kept prisoner in his cabin."

"What for?"

"I hardly know. Perhaps because he tried to seize the yacht; but he sometimes dined with us."

"That is curious. Your father and the defendant, I suppose, talked about their plans?"

"My father did."

"And what were they?"

"They were plans to obtain money, and, so far as I could understand, to bring about a revolution in India."

"And the defendant was to take part in them?"

"Mr. Gilbert," said Corine, "would not take part in them. He left the yacht at the first opportunity."

"With you?"

Corine did not answer.

"In the meantime, I suppose he fell in love with you, and preferred your society to that of the Prince?"

Still Corine did not answer.

At last this most painful scene came to an end. Corine had sacrificed herself, and subjected herself to insult, for nothing, for the magistrate intimated that he intended to send the case for trial. I was, however, again remanded in custody, as the prosecution now wished to call further evidence before the magistrate. So far as I could gather, an attempt would be made to discredit the account given by Corine of our escape. It would, I could clearly see, be urged that in all probability the yacht had foundered, and that Corine and I had, in consequence, saved ourselves in one of the boats. Further, that the account given by Corine of the matter was simply intended to remove suspicion from me, and enable me to return to England, which, had it not been for the wreck, I should never have done.

At any other time my reputation as a well-known member of the Bar would have stood me in good stead, but now, when good reputations were being knocked over like ninepins by the revelations in Coey's papers, it would, I felt, be of little use to say to a jury that all my life I had been known as an honest man. The obvious reply would be, "For years we have also regarded Lord A., Sir B. C., and the Marquis of D. as honest men. Every man is honest until he is found out."

My one consolation during this dark time was the visits I had from Corine, who, knowing my innocence, was confident that all would come right in the end. I did not undeceive her, but my knowledge of legal matters told me that the balance of

evidence was against me, and that my position was a very serious one. There was, unfortunately, far more than circumstantial evidence, for I had actually sailed from England in the companionship of the escaping prisoner and his defaulting bail. It was I who, according to the Judge, had unnecessarily obtained the release of King; that fatal cheque evidenced an intention on the part of the bail to pay me a large sum of money; I had written what was on the face of it an incriminating letter to Coey; the solicitor who had instructed me had bolted; finally my own clerk had, and it would be assumed on my instructions, attempted to prevent the detective obtaining ingress to my chambers. What use would it be for Aaron Rodd to swear that he had received no instructions from me to that effect? What jury would believe him? What use would it be for Corine to tell the jury of our extraordinary attempt to seize the yacht, and of our still more extraordinary escape? Who would believe her without corroboration in face of the strong evidence against me? If anything—and this was the opinion of my solicitor—my position had become worse after her evidence had been given, for now it was known that I had been a friend of King's when he was passing under the name of Prince Rozan, that I was in love with his daughter, and that when the Kilmores were sent from the yacht I remained on board. The prospect was black indeed—hopelessly black.

It had been on my mind that I ought to let the Government have information concerning Prince



Rozan's insurrectionary schemes. After Corine had given her evidence I had no hesitation about the matter, and drew up a long report, which my solicitor undertook should be delivered into the hands of the Secretary of State for India. I have no doubt that at the time it was considered simply a clever move on my part to give a little colour to Corine's story.

"I'm afraid it won't do you any good," said my solicitor; "but I don't see that it can do any harm. Send it in by all means." I had the uncomfortable feeling that even he doubted the truth of my statements.

For another week I had to endure close confinement in the House of Detention at Clerkenwell—a weary, miserable time. I felt it all the more severely after the freedom of that glorious life on the Arctic Ocean; for it seemed to me glorious now by comparison with the present. What would I not have given to be back with Corine on that silvery strand in our lonely isle, with no other companions than the sea-birds and seals! Often I dreamt that we were again in that little boat, sailing over the great ocean, or scrambling side by side up the mountains of the Farøe Islands, only to awake and find myself in prison.

It may be asked, what were my own relations doing for me all this while. I have not intruded them into this story, for they have no share in it. The few relations I have are distant ones, and have troubled me but little. After the death of my

father and mother I was practically alone in the world. The judgment of relatives on one's supposed peccadilloes is apt to be harsh: "Serve him right, the silly fool," is as often as not their verdict. With the exception of an old uncle in Yorkshire, whom I had never seen, and who wrote me that if a fifty-pound note would help me in my defence he would be willing to send it for the sake of the family name, all of them kept aloof. I was left to fight my battle alone. Even my friends at the Bar shunned me. In their eyes I was "one of Coey's lot." That was enough for them.

I think at this time I was as near breaking my heart as a man could well be. It was on the very day before my last appearance in the Police Court that a rift appeared in the clouds. I was sitting gloomy and hopeless, when a warder summoned me to the room where prisoners were allowed to see visitors. Immediately I entered the doorway I experienced such a shock that, in my weak, worn-out condition, I nearly fainted. There in front of me were Sir Patrick Kilmore and his brother Maurice.



CHAPTER XXVII

REJECTED

I STOOD there clinging to the door-handle, my legs almost giving way beneath me.

"What! you are alive?" I at last gasped out.

"Very much so," said Pat. "My dear boy! how did you get into this hole?"

"I thought you were dead," I said. "I had given up all hopes of ever seeing you again."

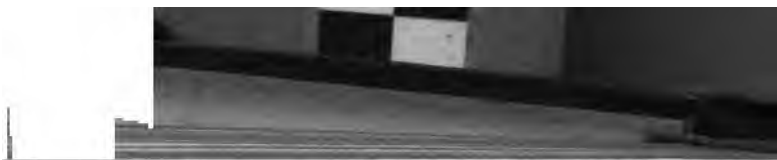
"Faith! we 'd very nearly given up all hopes of seeing ourselves again," said Pat. "We starved for three days, and were on the point of eating my wife's pugs when we were picked up by a whaler."

"Then you did n't make Iceland?" I said.

"Make Iceland, indeed! I should think not!" cried Pat, indignantly. "That dirty blackguard of a Hindoo told us we 'd only a few miles to get to land; but we were three hundred miles away if we were an inch; and he started us off in the wrong direction."

"I fear the Afghans are a very treacherous and revengeful race," said Maurice. "He never forgave us our attempt to seize the yacht, and evidently meant us to die of starvation."

I asked after Lady Pat and Rhona. Both were



well, and even Ben and Benista had been brought back safely to England. Maurice went on to tell me that when matters were getting very serious indeed, a small Norwegian whaling sloop sighted the pinnacle and rescued those on board. She was a slow, old-fashioned vessel, which, after being delayed by storms, ultimately landed her passengers at Hammerfest. Lady Pat was seriously ill from the effects of the exposure, and they had to wait in that far northern town until she recovered, then took a steamer down the coast to Bergen, whence they journeyed to England, arriving there on the previous day. They had read about my prosecution, in the newspapers on board the steamboat. In fact, all the English passengers had been talking about it. Maurice had already held a long consultation with my solicitor, and, subject to my approval, he, his brother, and the two ladies were to be called as witnesses at the Police Court next day. An effort was to be made to get the case dismissed then and there. One of the smartest men practising at the Criminal Bar had been retained to appear for me. Pat and his wife had both been busy running about London, seeing various people of influence, and interesting them in my case.

I felt far more anxious concerning the morrow now that fresh hopes had been raised, and slept little that night. But morning came at last, and it was right pleasant to see Lady Pat's and Rhona's bright faces in the Police Court. When the former caught sight of me, as I stepped into the dock and stood with a



policeman by my side, her beautiful violet-grey eyes suddenly filled with compassionate tears. Corine, who was sitting with them, looked quite blooming, confident, and happy. Maurice was grave as usual; Pat exceedingly nervous. The Court was densely crowded, for somehow it had leaked out that sensational developments were expected.

The inquiry that day took long in the hearing. The Kilmores were severely, almost savagely, cross-examined by the solicitor for the prosecution, but he naturally failed to shake their evidence in the slightest degree. If Pat had been the only witness, I do not know what would have happened, for he was asked some very awkward questions concerning his connection with Coey's companies, and he soon became confused, and blundered terribly in his answers. But Maurice Kilmore, whose cross-examination fortunately took place after that of his brother, cleared up each point satisfactorily, and was corroborated in every respect by Lady Pat and Rhona. In the end the magistrate was so thoroughly satisfied that a grave mistake had been made, that apparently without much hesitation he ordered my dismissal. He was good enough to say that I left the Court "without a stain on my character."

"Where will we take him to?" asked Lady Pat as we were entering her carriage, and I was being greeted affectionately by Ben and Benista; and then, answering her own question: "Sure, drive to Bond Street, John. It must be weeks since you had a decent meal, Lucas. We will go to Legros'."

The three ladies and I travelled to the famous restaurant in the landau, Pat and Maurice following in a hansom. It was a right merry luncheon party. The Duke's favourite vintage of dry champagne flowed freely. No sooner were our glasses filled than Pat, looking at his wife with a humorous smile, said: "Now I'll give you all a toast. Here's to the health of the future Mr. and Mrs. Kilmore."

"Imagine! And who might they be?" said Lady Pat with a fine air of surprise.

I looked at Rhona. She was stroking Benista, and to all appearance quite unaware of what was passing. From her I turned my eyes to the celibate clergyman, and saw him fingering his glass, gazing with a half-smiling, half-defiant air at a water-colour drawing just over my head.

"Well, whoever they are, or are going to be,—excuse me, I fear we are getting rather mixed,—I will drink their health with pleasure," said I. "May they have a long life and every happiness."

"Hear! hear!" cried Lady Pat, dipping her pretty lips into the sparkling wine.

And still Rhona stroked the pug, and still Maurice looked at the water-colour.

"Well, are n't you going to return thanks, *Brother Maurice*?" said Pat, giving the young clergyman a dig with his elbow.

"We have all much to be thankful for," said Maurice, gravely, seeming to come to himself, and by no means well pleased at the turn of conversation.

"I declare, Benista gets prettier every day," said Rhona, with a perfect assumption of having heard nothing.

"Will you believe me, Lucas," said Lady Pat, "but they wanted to kill me dogs, and eat them—the savages! I told them they 'd have to kill me first, and eat me afterwards if they liked and welcome. Just look at the darlin's now!" (Each pug had a chair to itself at the table. Benista was gnawing a cutlet bone; Ben had commenced to lap out of a finger-glass and was looking mightily indignant at finding rose-water therein.) "Imagine anyone being able to eat the dears! That will give you some idea of how hungry we were."

"But," said I, with a sudden burst of recollection, "how in the world was it that we fell in with the pinnacle?"

"You fell in with the pinnacle?" cried Pat.

"Yes, indeed we did," said Corine. "It kept bumping against us all night. We could n't get rid of the thing. It was like a horrible nightmare."

"Well, you see," said Maurice, "it was too big to get on to the whaler's deck, so we towed it astern for three days. It was a splendid little craft, and the captain of the whaler thought a great deal of it. Then bad weather came on, and everything had to be taken out to lighten it. Finally the sea ran so high that the boat filled with water, and the tow-rope had to be cut. Of course, we never saw it again. It must have drifted down your way."

My kind-hearted friends insisted on my going to

stay with them for a week or two, Lady Pat declaring she was sure I had been half starved in the House of Detention. I accepted the invitation, nothing loath, for Corine was to be one of the party, which also included Rhona, and Maurice, whose celibacy seemed to be in danger.

Quiet, happy, restful days now ensued, grateful indeed after the trials and tribulations of the past three months. I ventured to once more press my suit with Corine, but again she refused me, in kindly fashion enough, but firmly. I asked her reasons, but she would give me none. Finally I laid my case before my hostess, and begged her assistance. Lady Pat, as I think I have told somewhere earlier in this story, loved nothing better than match-making, except maybe a little flutter on a race-course.

"Well, it's surprised I am," she cried, "that Corine should refuse you. I'll talk to her."

"Yes," I said, "but do find out why she won't have me. I can't understand it. I believe—I hope you won't think me awfully conceited—that she's very fond of me; but——"

"Ah, don't mind!" cried Lady Pat. "Sure, it's just some girlish whim. We'll soon get over that."

A day or two later, while I was smoking a cigar in the conservatory after breakfast, she came to me looking rather grave.

"I have spoken to your lady love, Lucas," she said. "It's a perverse thing she is. Imagine, now! she declares she won't marry you because she thinks 't will bring disgrace on you."



"Disgrace! How?"

"Why, on account of that miserable father of hers. She thinks ye would never hold up your head again in England if married to a girl whose father had stood in the dock. And sure there 's something in that, ye know, Lucas. I think, now ye know what 's the matter, ye 'd better speak to her again yourself. She 'll bring a nice little dowry to her husband, I can tell you. She has jewels in a tin box upstairs, worth fifteen or twenty thousand pounds, at the very least. It 's in old-fashioned settings they are, but I have n't seen such diamonds for a long time."

"Yes," I said, "no doubt they were in the tin box she brought from the yacht. Rozan gave it into her keeping at the commencement of the cruise, in case anything happened to him. He said it contained property belonging to her mother, and she was to regard it as hers. I had not the least conception it would prove so valuable."

"No, of course ye had n't," said Lady Pat in a matter-of-fact way. "Now take the first chance of speaking to her. I 'll bring her down into the drawing-room, and then—well, I 'll make an excuse to go out and leave ye alone. I 'd be right pleased to see you and Maurice married on the same day."

"Then he really is to be married?" I asked, for this was the first definite intimation on the subject any of them had made me.

"Well, yes. You see, Pat did n't at all like the idea of an actress; but then, Maurice had only to

please himself, so where was the use of objecting ? Besides, look what a dear, good girl Rhona 's proved herself—so brave and plucky ! She 'll make him a good wife, depend on it ; of course she 'll leave the stage. Anyhow, it 's a thousand times better than the poor fellow burying himself in the Kensington monastery, and the property falling to those horrid O'Sullivans. Now go into the drawing-room, and see if you can't find a good baritone song in *Iolanthe*. There 's one something about King George's glorious days."

I did as I was told, and made a pretence of looking through the Gilbert and Sullivan opera. Presently the door opened and Corine entered, alone.

" Lady Pat asked me to come down and try a song out of *Iolanthe*," she said.

" Lady Pat asked me to come down and try a song out of *Iolanthe*," I echoed.

Corine looked puzzled. " Perhaps she meant a duet," she suggested.

" Very likely," I answered.

" Have you found one ? " she asked.

" No. I can't find it without your help."

I rose, and she took my place on the music-stool. I brought up a chair, and sat by her side.

" Now, dearest," I said, taking both her hands in mine, " our duet must be about two lovers, who both love one another, but one of whom has a foolish fancy—good and well-intentioned, but foolish—— "

" Oh, please, Lucas, don't let us talk any more about that," she begged.



"Yes, but I must talk about it, for it concerns your happiness as much as mine. Now, dear, I hear that you won't marry me simply because your father was—" I faltered, for I hardly knew how to express myself. I could not call him a criminal or a swindler to his daughter's face.

"I know too well what he was," she said.

"But, Corine dear! That really won't affect me in the least. If you will only marry me I shall have the most beautiful and most wonderful wife in England, and all London, instead of pointing a finger at me, will be envious of me. You will hear nothing about your father, dear. Nor shall I. And even if there was some little unpleasantness, what would that count against our great love?"

"I love you, Lucas," she answered, "more than ever I thought it possible for woman to love man, and it is that love which forbids me wronging you, and possibly endangering your life. I cannot let you marry the daughter of a very bad man indeed. You only knew him as one dishonest in money matters, but I have heard things let fall by the crew of the *Lorelei*, for I was beginning to understand their language a little, which were too horrible even for me to tell you. I believe there was nothing so awful or so bad that he would not do to gain his ends. I believe he would never forgive an injury. Look how he treated the Kilmores, making the pretence of sending them ashore, but really trying to kill them in a most cruel manner. If I married you, and linked my name with yours, do you think

he would ever forgive you ? Some day his vengeance might fall upon us both. Even as it is, I fear for you."

To this I urged everything a man could. I had no dread of her father's vengeance. Here, in England, people were safe from that kind of thing—at least so I assured her, but I could not help feeling that if Rozan wanted me out of the way, he would, with his immense wealth, find a means of effecting his dire purpose. But I was ready to risk everything for Corine. All I could urge availed me nothing, however. She was firm in her refusal.

A few hours after our sad duet, I made the excuse of having to run down to Surrey to see an old friend, and departed.



CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CONJURER

WHEN I returned to London I began to attend regularly at chambers, but found that most of my work had left me. The class of solicitors who had hitherto briefed me were just the men to fight shy of retaining as Counsel a man who had been mixed up in the Coey scandals. As those who have troubled to read these pages so far can see for themselves, I was innocent of any dealings with the erstwhile Great Financier, and indeed had ever viewed his proceedings with a lively sense of disgust. Still, much of the mud flung at me during the magisterial proceedings had undoubtedly stuck, and I almost seemed to be under a ban. Even my oldest friends at the Bar tried to avoid me—at least so I fancied. I may have been becoming gloomy and morose, and my society, being anything but cheerful, was not sought so much as formerly. Day after day I sat in my chambers, or gloomily wandered about the Courts, waiting for the briefs which did not come.

My prospects became so serious, and I worried so over my separation from Corine, that my health

began to suffer. I went to consult my old friend, Sir Egerton Spinescue. I knew I could trust him to tell me the truth about myself. I was tapped, sounded, and listened to, and generally diagnosed. The upshot of the process was that Spinescue, with an unusually solemn face, assured me that if I did not winter abroad — he recommended Egypt — I might not have an opportunity of again summering in England. He attributed my symptoms, whatever they were, to the exposure in the dingy of the *Lorelei*; but I knew right well that I had suffered far worse things since that glorious voyage alone with my dear girl. I was moved to ask him if Nile water could heal a broken heart.

"Ah!" he ejaculated. "So that 's it! I don't know that it can; but change of scene, you know, will help. And whatever your troubles of that kind may be, it is absolutely necessary to winter out of England. That 's my advice, old man, and I further advise you to take it."

There was no reason why I should stay in London. I had nothing to do beyond a little County Court work, which, so far as my reputation was concerned, I was just as well without. Yes, I would do as Spinescue had said.

Three weeks later I was at Cairo. The gaieties of the winter city jarred my overstrung nerves, and I thankfully accepted the offer made me by some hotel acquaintances to journey with them up the Nile in a dahabeah to the First Cataract. But the flat, sandy plains on both sides of us, with the great



Pyramids rising out of them, did not help to cheer me. I fear I grew more melancholy than ever, and must have been anything but a pleasant companion. A cruise in the Mediterranean would have been better than this. I was glad when we reverted to civilisation.

I hardly knew where next to turn my steps. Cairo was hateful to me, but I lingered on there some days, and then journeyed to Port Said to get a glimpse of the Suez Canal. Here I met old Hewit, Q.C., homeward bound from India, where he had been to defend a potentate charged with poisoning certain of his relatives. He had left the steamer at Port Said so that he might spend a few days in Egypt. He had received such a "whacking big fee," to use his own words, that he could well afford a holiday. He was a man I had known for a good many years, and was not sorry to meet him. I took him back to Cairo, and it gave me something to do to trot him about and show him the lions. After we had been together a few days I told him my strange story.

"Really," said he, very gravely, "that was a touch-and-go affair. Almost any jury would have convicted without the Kilmores' evidence. Now, are you in a fit state of mind to be astonished?"

"My state of mind," said I, "is one in which astonishment can hardly find place. I have given up being surprised at anything."

"But you will be at this," said my old friend. He led me on to the verandah of the hotel. "Now," said he, "order some drink of the country, cool and

refreshing, if there is such a thing, and you shall hear my story; but first tell me, what do you make of this Indian Prince of yours? Was he genuine in his revolutionary ideas?"

"He seemed genuine enough," I answered, "but then he was such a consummate actor—look at him shamming paralysis so successfully in the dock—that I have no confidence in my own opinion."

"He may have been a mere adventurer after all," said Hewit, musingly. "Perhaps he only acted the Afghan patriot to make his calling appear a little less disreputable in your respectable eyes. It's quite clear he bought the solicitor and kidnapped you in the belief that the whole proceedings would be stopped for a while, and give him time to get his affairs wound up in England and his fortune shifted to some rendezvous of the gang, very likely an uninhabited island in the Pacific. All this had to be done before it was found out that King and Rozan were the same man. You see it never was found out until your return, so the rascal did not miscalculate the results of his daring action. I wonder he did n't kidnap the Judge too, or try to. It was clever of him taking you all up to the Arctic Ocean, the last place in the world where anyone would look for you. Well, what do you think your friend would be up to next?" And the old Q.C. put his head on one side, a little habit which had earned him the name of "Birdie Hewit."

"He might try America," I said. "Under some fresh disguise, of course, or——"



"Piracy?" suggested Hewit, with his head more on one side than ever.

"Why not? He did not carry a torpedo-boat for nothing," said I.

"Why not?" echoed Hewit. "But I am not telling you my story, am I? Well, we were in the middle of the Arabian Sea or thereabouts, when something went wrong with our steering gear. While we lay there rolling about in the sun in a way that was perfectly beastly, a big white schooner, not at all unlike your Indian Prince's, came creeping up to us, hailed us, and asked if she could render any assistance. We said 'no,' and then this shrimp of a vessel—that is, of course, I mean shrimp compared with our big liner—hailed back that they intended to take toll of what we had on board. In other words, they were going to commit an act of piracy on the high seas. Our captain told them in nautical and, I must admit, not over polite language, that they had better try it on. They replied by running out a long brass cannon, and firing shots at us which hammered in some of our iron plates, and knocked a deck-cabin to pieces. But they had reckoned without their host, for we had a couple of cannon on board, used, I suppose, for salutes and that sort of thing. Not very big ones, certainly, but big enough to send a shot through the wooden sides of the yacht. Then there were half-a-dozen officers coming home invalided. Several of these made good practice with their rifles, and began picking off the crew of the pirate. If our steamer had n't

been rolling so confoundedly, so one told me, they would have made quite a big bag. During the fight I went below and looked through my port-hole; I thought it was the safest place. I could see the yacht plainly, not two hundred yards away. Well, this game had been going on for about half an hour, and we had been mutually damaging one another, when I saw the pirates hoist out a long boat over the side and lower it into the water. What they were up to I did n't know then, and don't know now. She had n't got many men in her, so it hardly looked as if they were going to board us; but she was scarcely free of the davits before there was a terrific explosion close to the hull of the yacht. When the smoke cleared away, things looked very much as they were before, but the crew were running about like mad. In a few minutes the vessel began to lie over on one side a bit, and I saw that she was much deeper at the bow end than at the stern. All of a sudden she went down head foremost. They were just lowering another boat when this happened, but I don't think it had touched the water. However, to cut a long story short, when our captain sent one of our boats to see if there was anybody to pick up, there was nothing to be seen except a few odds and ends of wreckage, one of which was a life-buoy. And what do you think was written on it?"

"Not the *Lorelei*?" I said; "surely not the *Lorelei*?"

"It was indeed, old man," answered Hewit,



"and for your sake, and for the sake of humanity at large, I am thankful it was so. I'm sure it is better to wipe out such a gang, than to give them each five years' penal servitude, and then let them loose again ever so much more bloodthirsty and revengeful than they were before. You look a bit upset. Have a liqueur brandy?"

"I must go back to England at once," I said. "This is grand news. It may make a great difference in my life. I have no doubt they were hoist with their own petard. That boat they were getting overboard was the one fitted with torpedo-tubes. I am sure of it. It is the one Rozan showed to us after Maurice Kilmore tried to signal for help. If the whaler had seen our signal and come to our assistance, he would have sunk her. No doubt there was an accident—something went wrong with the discharging machinery. What a fearful end!"

"Well, it does n't much matter how it happened, so long as it did happen," remarked old Hewit, drily.

I hurried off to the telegraph office, and wired Lady Kilmore that the *Lorelei* was blown up, and everybody on board drowned. The following day I set sail for Marseilles, went thence overland to Calais as fast as the sluggish Continental railways would take me, and a few hours later was in England.

I reached the Kilmores' house in the evening. Dinner was not long over, and Lady Pat was alone in the drawing-room.

"Imagine!" she cried, starting up as my name was announced, and upsetting Ben and Benista off her lap with less consideration than I had ever known her show those distinguished dogs. "Oh, Lucas! Why did n't you telegraph you were coming?"

She said this with such a tone of regret, that I felt at once something serious had happened.

"If you had only come yesterday," she went on, "you would have been in time."

"In time for what?"

"Why, to see Corine before she left for India."

"Left for India! Oh, my God! You don't mean it. Why, I have travelled hundreds of miles to see her—to find her."

"Now sit ye down, Lucas," said Lady Pat, soothingly, motioning to a seat beside her on the couch. "Sit ye down, and I'll tell ye all about it. It is n't such bad news after all."

"Not bad news, Lady Pat! Why, we may be parted for months—years. I may never see her again. Is it too late to stop her?"

"I'm afraid it is," said Lady Pat, thoughtfully. "Yes,"—she looked at her watch,— "it's past nine o'clock. You could do nothing to-night. Just listen to me while I tell you what has happened in your absence. On New Year's Eve we gave a children's party, and had a conjurer. The man had left some of his apparatus behind him, and wanted to borrow a tin box to perform some of his tricks. I had n't anything of the kind, but Corine, who was



staying with us, offered to lend him that box you know very well, the one which contained her jewels. After our little entertainment was over the conjurer came to me and asked where the box had come from. 'It's a very remarkable one,' he said. 'I have only seen one like it, and that was owned by a Hindoo conjurer who used it for performing a very difficult trick. It has a false bottom.'

"I called Corine, and the man showed us how, by simply pressing the two sides together, a thin piece of metal flew up and disclosed a small space underneath. In that small space we found some very important papers. D'ye follow me?"

"Yes."

"Well, among those papers was the marriage certificate of—who d'ye think? Ye'll never guess."

"No, I am not likely to."

"Why, of the eldest sister of that same little widow who captivated Brother Maurice when he was in India."

"Then she married Rozan?"

"No, not a bit of it. She married Lord Redingfield——"

"But what has that to do with——"

"Ah, be quiet, and I'll tell you. There was a small packet of letters to the poor woman from her husband. It was evident that their marriage was a secret one, and the man, who had married against his father's wish, was afraid of being disinherited. It's well known that Lord Redingfield was a black

sheep, and I suppose he treated his wife badly, for she related in a brief letter she enclosed with other papers, that she was entrusting her infant daughter, Corine, to an Indian Prince who had promised to take her to England and see that she was recognised as a daughter of Lord Redingfield. The poor woman no doubt put the letters and papers—there was a birth certificate among them—in the secret bottom of the box along with her jewelry, and gave it to Prince Rozan, who, for reasons of his own, had the child brought up in a convent, and represented her to be his daughter. Now, I suppose, Lucas," Lady Pat said with a laugh, "ye 're after thinking that there 's no just cause or impediment why Corine should refuse ye any longer?"

"No. I was thinking what imp of bad fortune prompted her to go to India just when things were working out so well."

"Why, you see, when the papers were found she did n't seem to care very much, for she always had a suspicion that she was not Rozan's daughter. But—and mind she loves you, Lucas; there 's no doubt about it—she still declined to consider marriage with you—for I often talked to her about it—while Rozan was alive. She was so sure he would do you some injury. But when the telegram came that the *Lorelei* had gone down, then, you may believe me, that made a great change in her, and she began worrying about her mother, and wanted to be quite sure that she was her mother's child; as if anyone doubted it! And she was actually going



out to India just to see her mother's grave and some of her aunts, and make a few inquiries. But I don't think she would have done even that, Lucas, if it had n't been for your being in Egypt, for she asked me to telegraph to you to meet her on the way. You could n't have got my telegram, for I only sent it yesterday."

"Oh, this is too bad, Lady Pat!" said I, jumping up and walking about the room, hardly able to contain myself. "Here is she starting on this voyage, expecting to meet me at Port Said, and I in England!"

"Where are your wits, Lucas?" cried Lady Pat. "If the wires are still in working order why would n't you stop her on the way?"

"But where can I wire to?"

"The steamer touches at Brindisi."

"Where does she sail from?"

"Faith! I don't know exactly. Somewhere down in the docks."

"What docks?" I asked, impatiently.

"Why, the London docks, to be sure."

"But when did she sail?"

"I don't rightly know. Pat saw her off. I had one of my bad headaches this afternoon."

"What! Was it only this afternoon?" I exclaimed. "Where's Pat?—in the dining-room?"

"Yes. Go down to him if ye like."

I never went down-stairs quicker in my life, and burst into the dining-room to the astonishment of Pat and Maurice.



"Don't ask me any questions," I said. "Tell me, when does the steamer sail?"

"Meaning Corine's steamer?" said Pat, grasping the situation instantly.

"Yes, of course."

"Four o'clock to-morrow morning, my boy. You'll have plenty of time to stop her, and I wish you luck, and joy too, for I hear there's no longer any just cause or impediment why et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Now sit down and have a glass of port. You are more like a rampaging lunatic than a long-headed barrister."

Four o'clock; and it was then ten.

"No, I won't—well, one glass then"; for he had poured it out and handed it to me. "Excuse me running off in such a hurry. But you'll understand."

"Faith! we understand," said Pat. "Good luck to you, my boy! I'll tell the clerk to have the banns put up to-morrow."

I was out of the room almost before he had finished the sentence, hailed a cab, and ordered the man to drive to the docks.

"What docks, sir?" he asked.

I am afraid I swore long and loudly. In my hurry I had forgotten to ask even the name of the ship or the particular part of the Thames from which she sailed. I returned to the house, obtained the information, and promising the man extra money if he would drive fast, we were soon bowling rapidly along, up Oxford Street, eastward.



I had feared to find some difficulty in getting on board, that at such a late hour the dock would be closed. But the whole place was lit by electric light, and gangs of busy workers were engaged filling the hold of the huge liner, *Utopia*. Windlasses were creaking, chains were rattling, and there was a heavy tramp of men ever running backwards and forwards, to and fro, between the warehouses and the vessel.

After being questioned as to my business, I was allowed to go on board. I lost myself for a while in a labyrinth of passages and cabins, but at last came face to face with the chief stewardess.

"I have an important message for the Princess Rozan," said I.

The woman stared at me. "Princess Rozan?" she said. "I don't know of any such lady on board."

"Yes, Princess Corine or Princess Rozan," I repeated. "It's the same thing."

The stewardess left me to consult the purser, and then I remembered that Corine had a new name. She would in all probability be only too glad to give up a title which was not hers. When the woman returned I told her that I had made a mistake. My message was addressed to the Honourable Miss Redingfield. This time I hit the mark.

"There is a Miss Redingfield on board," said the stewardess. "Can I take a note to her?"

"No," I said. "I want to see her. No one but myself can give the message. Tell her, if you

please, that Mr. Lucas Gilbert wishes to speak to her."

The woman looked at me suspiciously. My mistake as to the name must have appeared peculiar. After some slight hesitation she took me to the main saloon and bade me wait there. The few minutes seemed an eternity, but at last—yes, at last!—I saw Corine coming towards me; and I read that in her face which told me happiness was at last in sight.

"Corine," I said, "I have come for you. I could not let you go for this voyage.—At least not without me," I added as an afterthought.

"I expected to meet you at Port Said," she answered. "I was not running away from you, Lucas, dear!"

I cannot relate here all that we said. Some things are too sacred even for such a candid confession of my past as I have made in these pages. But one thing I may say, that when the noble liner, *Utopia*, was warped out of dock some two hours later, neither I nor the Honourable Miss Redingfield was on board. England was our Utopia just then.

About ten days later I thought I would go and see Sir Egerton Spinescue.

"You are a good patient, Gilbert," said he. "You do me credit."

"Certainly Egypt had n't much to do with it," I answered, "for I came back a wreck; but the

last ten days in foggy London have quite set me up. Do you think I am in a fit state of health to be married ? ”

Spinescue whistled. “ So that ’s it, is it ? ” he cried. “ By Jove! Yes, old man ; and the sooner the better. I congratulate you. And don’t you think, when the time comes, that a man who has had the honour of attending the accouchement of a royal princess, is too proud to oblige a friend. ”

I suppose it was a compliment on the part of my eminent medical friend, who had gained his knight-hood in consequence of the incident referred to, but I must confess to having no relish for obstetrical witticisms.

The story of those eventful and terrible six months of my life is now told. Rhona and Corine were married on the same day, from the house of our best of friends, Lady Kilmore, who was delighted that her plot against the celibate views of her brother-in-law had proved so absolutely successful. Ben and Benista both ate too much wedding cake.

Corine went to India after all, but this second great voyage of her lifetime was, like the first, taken in the company of the Counsel for the Prosecution in “ Reg. v. King. ” In India we had no difficulty in finding Brother Maurice’s captivating little jilt of a widow, who welcomed her niece with open arms, and laughed till the tears ran down her face when she heard the story of Maurice’s rescue from a celibate cell in the Kensington monastery, by a young actress with Rubens-red hair. We visited poor



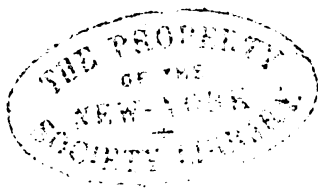
286 THE PASSING OF PRINCE ROZAN

Lady Redingfield's grave at Calcutta, traced out several of her relatives, and Corine was accepted as a member of the family.

Of Prince Rozan and his revolutionary schemes we have heard no more. He and Coey have passed out of our lives completely—at least so far as we know, for though I have not much doubt on the subject, I must say there is no definite proof that either of the men were on board the *Lorelei* when she went down.

I am now a prosperous man apart from my wife's fortune, for which I am not a little thankful. It cannot be a pleasant thing to have to ask the weaker vessel for pocket money. When we came back to England, to the evident satisfaction of Aaron Rodd I began to attend chambers again. Soon my practice returned, for the story of the Coey affair was quickly forgotten, like everything else in these times, when events march at the double. Indeed it was only the other day I had to appear at a Police Court on behalf of Lady Pat, who was fined for the seventeenth time for defying the muzzling order of the Board of Agriculture.

THE END





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